



WAR PATH AND HUNTING TRAIL

ELMER RUSSELL GREGORY



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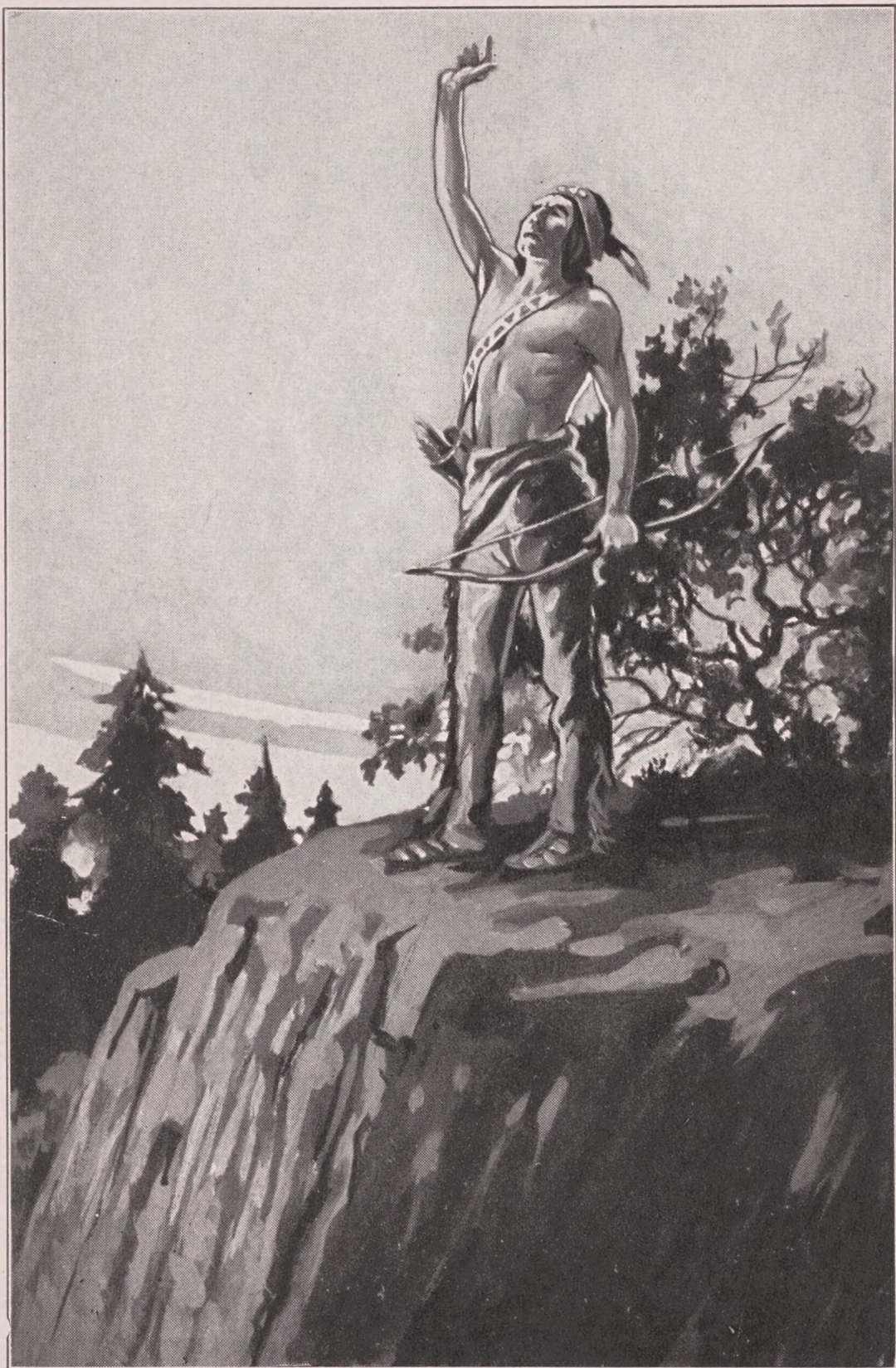
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[See page 70

Boldly outlined on the cliff stood the erect figure of
a solitary warrior.

WAR PATH AND HUNTING TRAIL

ADVENTURES OF INDIAN BOYS

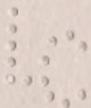
BY

ELMER RUSSELL GREGOR

AUTHOR OF

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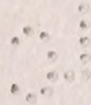
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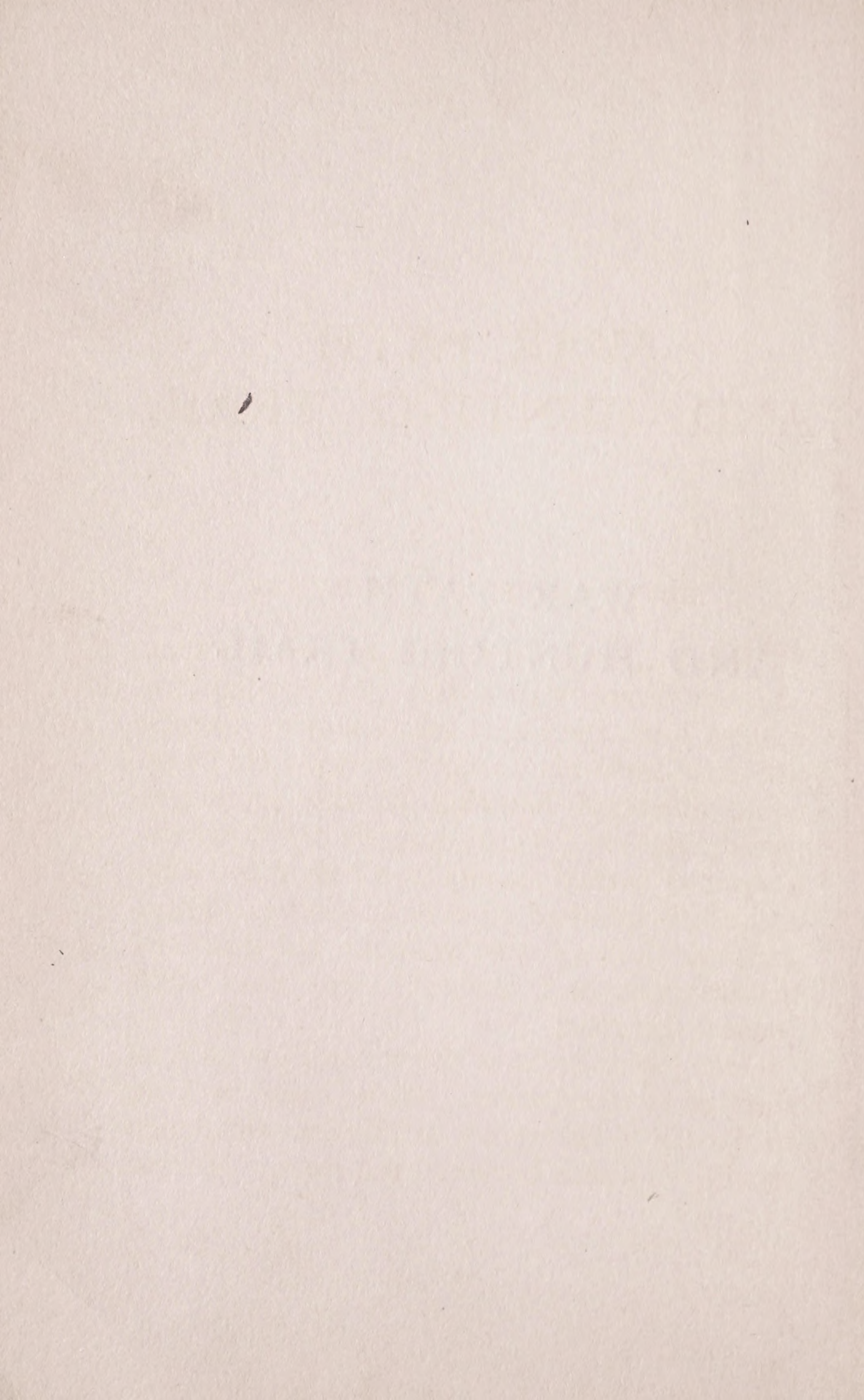
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INTRODUCTION

IN this book, as in *The Red Arrow*, I have endeavored to show the Indian as he actually was. These adventures belong to the realm of fiction, but the thoughts, motives, customs, and traditions which are illustrated are those which are characteristic of the old-time red man. I have aimed to tell stories of clean and wholesome adventure which have a certain historical value because they show the Indian as he was. In this Indian life of the olden time there was a manly self-reliance which is the foundation of true character and real success. Whatever the faults of the Indians were, they should be judged according to their standards, and assuredly their unfaltering faith and courage, their self-denial and loyalty, have some lesson for those who have come after them.

ELMER RUSSELL GREGOR.

WAR PATH
AND HUNTING TRAIL



WAR PATH AND HUNTING TRAIL

I

SILVER CLOUD, THE DELAWARE

THE first gray tinge of dawn was flooding the forest with a soft gray twilight as Silver Cloud, the Delaware, cast aside his robe and rose from his couch of ferns. He stood some moments listening to the sounds of awakening life. Birds sang in the thickets, a squirrel barked saucily in a tree above him, and a fish splashed close to the shore. Then, satisfied that all was well, the lad gathered his weapons and made his way cautiously toward the river.

Once within sight of the water, Silver Cloud stopped to reconnoiter. As he heard nothing to alarm him, he crept stealthily into the fringe of willows which bordered the river. He had

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scarcely concealed himself, however, when he saw something which caused him to start with surprise.

A bark canoe had rounded a bend of the stream and was drifting slowly toward his hiding-place. Silver Cloud watched it with considerable uneasiness. To all appearances it was unoccupied and abandoned. Still the young Delaware feared a trap. As it came nearer he identified it as being of Delaware workmanship. His first impulse was to swim out and recover it, but a moment's reflection convinced him that such recklessness might prove fatal, and he told himself that he must be cautious. He studied the approaching craft with great attention. Silver Cloud had been well trained in the art of observing, and his sharp eyes soon told him enough to quiet his fears. He noted that the canoe rode high upon the water, which satisfied him that it was without an occupant. As it drifted on an even keel and failed to leave a ripple he felt sure that it did not conceal some crafty swimmer who might have been using it as a shield. Assured, therefore, that the mysterious craft was deserted, the alert Delaware searched his brain for a way to gain possession of it.

Some distance below Silver Cloud's place

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of concealment a long, narrow strip of gravelly beach extended far out into the river. Much to the lad's delight he saw that the canoe was drifting directly toward that obstacle. He watched with bated breath until the prize finally grounded upon the projecting bar. Then as the canoe swung slowly about with the current he realized that he must act quickly if he would secure the trophy. Skulking through the bushes with the speed and agility of a fox, the young Delaware made his way toward the canoe. It had already swung stern foremost down the stream, and as the lad hesitated he saw the bow sliding from the beach.

Silver Cloud waded swiftly into the water and seized the unoccupied canoe. As he drew it toward him the bow slipped into the water and left a telltale mark on the gravelly bar. The young Delaware made no attempt to erase it, for he knew that any one who might follow on the trail would see it and be deceived. It appeared as though, having grounded at that spot, the canoe had drifted around with the current and floated away.

The excited lad waded with his prize until he found a safe hiding-place, and then he dragged the canoe into the bushes. He

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uttered an exclamation of surprise as he saw a long hickory bow and a buckskin quiver filled with arrows lying in the bottom of the abandoned canoe. A moment later he had them in his hands, staring at them in amazement. The weapons were of Delaware manufacture, and, what was still more astounding, Silver Cloud recognized the decorations on the buckskin quiver. It was the property of his envious rival, Spotted Hawk.

Spotted Hawk had long been jealous of the superior exploits of Silver Cloud, and had taken every opportunity to annoy and humiliate him. A feud had thus sprung up between them, and while they had never permitted their feelings to lead them into actual combat, they had lived a sort of armed hostility toward each other.

For many moments after this startling discovery, therefore, Silver Cloud stood absorbed in gloomy meditation. His mind was occupied with two important questions, which for the moment at least he saw no way of answering. He would have given almost everything he possessed to know how far the canoe had drifted on its solitary journey, and how it chanced to contain Spotted Hawk's weapons. He knew that his rival had left the village some days before on a hunting

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expedition, and it now seemed probable that he had ventured north into the Iroquois country in search of beaver. But that so skilful a warrior as Spotted Hawk should have left his canoe and his weapons unconcealed on the river-bank seemed incredible. Even Silver Cloud was compelled to acknowledge that his despised rival had more sense than to make such a blunder. Besides, Silver Cloud recalled the absence of the ash paddle. He told himself, therefore, that if Spotted Hawk had intentionally left his canoe he would have taken his weapons and left the paddle. The whole affair was a mystery, and the perplexed lad wondered what he should do.

The stream was one of several branches which emptied into the large body of water that flowed past the distant Delaware village. Silver Cloud's first impulse was to make a paddle and take the canoe to his tribe, with a detailed account of the mysterious circumstances which surrounded his discovery. On second thought, however, he saw two reasons for changing his mind. First, because he was not at all sure that any ill fate had befallen Spotted Hawk; and second, because he feared that the latter might have lost his canoe through carelessness, and, finding it in pos-

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session of Silver Cloud, might accuse him of stealing it. In such an event he knew only too well the banter that would go round at his expense. He told himself that a warrior should investigate before giving way to his suspicions, and he determined to learn the answer to the mystery. Silver Cloud believed that if Spotted Hawk had actually fallen into the hands of the Iroquois, they would despatch warriors to search for the missing canoe. The lad realized, therefore, that he was in considerable danger, and he knew that he must be alert and cautious.

Retaining the bow and quiver, Silver Cloud carried the canoe to the river. As he set the frail craft adrift he overturned it with his foot to make plausible the disappearance of the weapons. Then he watched with keen satisfaction as the canoe drifted toward a long stretch of white water some distance farther down the river. When it had finally passed from sight the young Delaware began to search for a safe place of concealment, where he might watch the stream for the appearance of rival or foe.

Many hours passed while Silver Cloud continued his alert vigil on the river-bank. Like a lynx watching for its prey, the young Delaware waited to learn the answer to the

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mystery. Nothing escaped him. His eyes saw every movement; his ears caught every sound.

Toward the end of the day, Silver Cloud's patience was rewarded as he discovered another canoe coming swiftly down the river. He saw at once that it differed in pattern and workmanship from the one which had preceded it. It was guided by two sturdy paddlers, whom Silver Cloud recognized even at a distance as Iroquois warriors. His heart bounded wildly against his ribs at sight of these fierce foes, but as he had concealed himself with great care, and felt secure from discovery, he determined to hold his ground.

The Iroquois canoemen kept their craft in the middle of the stream, while their keen eyes searched the shores for signs of the missing canoe. As they passed him Silver Cloud studied them closely. The warrior in the stern of the canoe was a powerful middle-aged man of threatening appearance, while his companion was a tall and lithesome youth of more pleasing countenance. They turned their canoe toward the gravelly beach upon which the Delaware canoe had grounded, and Silver Cloud wondered whether they would discover the telltale mark in the sand. He was not left long in doubt, for he saw the younger warrior pointing toward the beach and talk-

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ing excitedly to his companion. The latter, however, was more wary. Having discovered evidence of the missing canoe, he apparently feared an attack from shore. The two paddlers spent some time watching both banks of the river. Then, when they had finally assured themselves that they were in no immediate danger, they paddled close to the beach and studied the mark in the gravel. Silver Cloud watched in painful suspense. It was soon evident, however, that they had been deceived by his stratagem, for they pushed their canoe into the current and disappeared down the river.

The young Delaware might easily have killed both those warriors from ambush, but under the circumstances he believed it would have been most unwise. He felt almost certain that Spotted Hawk, his boastful rival, had fallen into the hands of his foes. He believed that the two warriors who had passed so close to him were on the trail of the Delaware canoe. Therefore Silver Cloud took keen satisfaction in the good sense which had persuaded him to set it afloat. He felt quite sure that those same warriors would return up the river as soon as their search was ended, and he determined to remain in his hiding-place to watch for them. Then he planned to

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follow them, hoping in this way to learn the fate of Spotted Hawk.

As the evening shadows were settling upon the forest the Iroquois scouts returned with the Delaware canoe. They passed well over toward the opposite bank of the river and disappeared from sight around a wooded arm of the shore.

Silver Cloud waited until he believed they were well beyond hearing, and then he gathered his robe and his weapons and stole cautiously away into the darkening forest. He hurried on their trail with the stealth and caution of a fox. As night finally closed down he ventured nearer the water, straining his eyes to catch the first warning flicker of a camp-fire. He fully realized the peril to which he was exposing himself, but his curiosity as to the fate of his rival led him on.

Silver Cloud had gone a considerable distance before he finally caught the first warning flash of light which advised him that he was approaching the Iroquois camp. His heart bounded at the thought, and he stopped behind a giant hemlock to watch and listen. Fearful of making a nearer approach until he had reconnoitered, the young Delaware decided to pass the balance of the night where he was, and to follow the travelers, if they

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resumed their journey at dawn. He would have preferred to crawl near enough to the hostile camp to learn the size of the war-party and the fate of Spotted Hawk. However, he feared that the capture of the latter might have made the Iroquois suspicious, and he believed the camp was guarded by sentinels. He determined to wait until daylight, therefore, before attempting a closer approach.

With the first gray streak of light in the eastern sky Silver Cloud waded carefully into the river and swam to the opposite shore. Having entered a country with which he was entirely unfamiliar, he planned to reconnoiter the hostile camp from a safe distance. Making his way with great caution until he was about opposite the spot where he supposed his enemies to be encamped, the wily young scout sank to his hands and knees and crawled into the fringe of bushes which lined the water. Peering carefully between the branches, he saw the dim outlines of three overturned canoes on the opposite shore.

A short time later a solitary warrior emerged from the shadows of the forest. He crossed the narrow beach and threw himself down at the edge of the water to drink. Then, as he rose and looked across the river, Silver

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Cloud recognized him as one of the warriors he had seen on the previous day. The Iroquois spent a few moments studying the Delaware canoe, and then he turned and disappeared into the woods.

Silver Cloud saw a column of blue smoke rising above the tops of the evergreens, and he knew that the Iroquois were broiling meat. The thought made him hungry, and he opened a small buckskin bag and ate the last of some parched corn which he had brought from the Delaware village. As the Iroquois were partaking of a hearty meal, he felt quite certain that the day's journey would be a long one. It was evident that they were convinced their captive had ventured upon their hunting-grounds alone, otherwise he knew they never would have permitted the telltale smoke signal to rise and betray them to any of his friends who might have been skulking about in the vicinity.

Silver Cloud was greatly surprised to learn that the war-party numbered only four warriors. He could scarcely believe his eyes as he saw them appear on the opposite shore with the Delaware prisoner. Spotted Hawk had his arms bound behind his back, and his legs loosely bound with buckskin, which rendered all attempts to escape futile. At a signal from one of his captors the prisoner seated

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himself in the center of his own canoe. Two warriors entered after him and paddled rapidly up the river. One of the remaining warriors launched one of the Iroquois canoes and followed his companions. The fourth warrior, whom Silver Cloud now recognized as the younger of the two men he had seen previously, remained behind. He stood some moments looking up the river after his comrades, and when they passed from view he, too, disappeared into the forest.

The perplexed young Delaware had not expected this manoeuvre, and it greatly interfered with his plans for trailing Spotted Hawk and his captors. It was evident that the Iroquois were taking no chances. Silver Cloud believed that they feared the presence of other Delawares in their domains, and to avoid being followed and surprised by a larger war-party they had left one of their number to watch the river.

Shortly after the Iroquois scout had entered the woods, Silver Cloud saw spasmodic puffs of smoke rising above the trees, and as they soon ceased he knew that the remaining warrior had beaten out the fire preparatory to leaving the camp-site. In fact, a few moments afterward the Iroquois appeared on the opposite shore with his robe and his

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weapons. The concealed Delaware had a second opportunity to kill one of his foes, with little peril to himself, but as on the former occasion he refrained. The unsuspecting Iroquois carried the remaining canoe to the water. Then after he had glanced carelessly across the water he entered the canoe and paddled swiftly down the river.

As soon as he had passed from sight, Silver Cloud left his place of concealment and hurried away on the trail of Spotted Hawk. Crossing mountains, circling about the borders of impassable swamps, and wading swift-running streams, the nimble-footed lad finally came in sight of the Iroquois. He followed them for many weary hours, until at the end of the day they entered a long lane of boiling rapids and shot ahead at a speed which soon carried them from his sight.

However, Silver Cloud continued resolutely on the trail. Long after it was dark he suddenly caught the odor of burning wood and he realized that at last he had overtaken his foes. Aware that he was close to the hostile camp, he turned from the river and began a cautious reconnoissance to locate the Iroquois fires. When he finally discovered them from the summit of a low ridge, he fitted an arrow to his bow and began a daring advance

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upon his enemies. Alert to his peril, Silver Cloud stole through the dark as stealthily as a panther creeping upon its prey. At last he came within sight of the blazing fires, and as he saw many shadows flitting across the illuminated tree-trunks, he believed that he had found the main camp of the Iroquois.

Determined to investigate, the daring lad planned to approach still closer to the camp. He was anxious to know whether Spotted Hawk and his captors were with this tribe. His petty jealousy toward his rival had suddenly vanished, and a splendid feeling of loyalty for his fellow-tribesman had taken its place. He determined, therefore, to risk his life in an attempt to rescue Spotted Hawk from the Iroquois.

Dropping close to the earth, Silver Cloud crawled cautiously toward the alluring circle of light. Stopping frequently to listen, he finally reached a sheltered position from which he could inspect the entire camp. As he saw many women and children, he knew at once that this was a permanent village. About the fire sat a circle of stern-faced warriors, listening to one of their number who, from his gestures, seemed to be telling some interesting tale of adventure. The speaker stood with his back toward Silver Cloud, and the latter care-

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fully moved to a new position so that he might see his face. Then his heart beat excitedly, for he recognized the boastful narrator as one of the little company who had captured Spotted Hawk.

A moment later Silver Cloud discovered the unfortunate prisoner himself, sitting a short distance apart from his foes. Around him were gathered the women and children, and the older boys of the camp, and it was evident that he was being made the target for all sorts of rude jests and insults.

Silver Cloud felt the hot fighting blood of his people rushing to his head. He understood enough of the boastful tale being told to the circle of warriors to guess the manner of Spotted Hawk's attack. Paddle in hand, the latter had been on the point of stepping from his canoe when the concealed Iroquois rushed from cover and overpowered him. In the scuffle which followed, the canoe had drifted away unnoticed. The tale was retold times without number, and Silver Cloud had little doubt that the narrators were doing full justice to their own courage and ability.

When the fires finally dwindled to beds of glowing embers the warriors rose and dispersed to the lodges. Then the reckless young scout crawled still nearer to the camp. His

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eyes glowed threateningly as he saw two stalwart guards pull the Delaware prisoner to his feet and push him roughly into one of the bark lodges. They entered after him, and Silver Cloud's heart filled with despair as he realized that the prisoner was to be closely guarded.

With a last feeble flicker the fire in the center of the village went out. Then darkness smothered the camp. The night-hush had fallen upon the wilderness, and all was still. The lithe, active body of the young Delaware moved slowly over the ground, drawing nearer and nearer to the bark-covered lodge which sheltered Spotted Hawk and his guards. At last Silver Cloud saw the dark outline of the prison looming up within bow-shot of him. He stopped to listen. All was still, and the daring scout wriggled slowly forward under cover of the night. When he finally reached his goal he crawled to the entrance of the lodge and strained his ears to catch the faintest sound from within.

Silver Cloud felt sure that Spotted Hawk would remain awake long after his guards had fallen asleep, and, relying on this, he bided his time. However, as he heard nothing to alarm him, and fearing that further delay might be fatal to his chances, he drew his knife and crept boldly into the lodge.

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Once inside the prison, the young Delaware crouched in the dark, not daring to move until the deep, measured breathing of the inmates assured him that two, at least, were sleeping heavily. As his sharp eyes accustomed themselves to the gloom he made out three indistinct forms lying side by side. Which was Spotted Hawk he had no way of determining. As he watched, however, the middle figure appeared to move slightly, and, watching closely, Silver Cloud saw the wakeful one's head rise slowly and drop back quickly as one of the other sleepers stirred.

The manœuver gave the young Delaware hope. It might be that Spotted Hawk had seen him enter the lodge and, hoping that it was a friend, had endeavored to give him a sign of recognition. At any rate, Silver Cloud determined to risk his life on the chance.

After watching the guards for further signs of wakefulness, and assuring himself that they were slumbering peacefully, the young Delaware crept forward, knife in hand. Once at the feet of the sleepers he paused, ready to sink his weapon in the hearts of the Iroquois at the first sign of waking. While he hesitated the middle figure slowly raised his head and then sank down between his companions. It was the final clue for which Silver Cloud

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had been waiting, and without a moment's delay he severed the thongs which bound the feet and legs of the captive. Then, as Spotted Hawk leaned forward, Silver Cloud stooped over and freed his arms. This accomplished, he gave Spotted Hawk his own bow and quiver, and waited with bated breath while the captive wriggled cautiously from between his guards. A moment afterward the two young Delawares passed from the Iroquois lodge as silently as shadows.

Once at the river, they found and launched their own canoe. Not a word had been spoken during the entire rescue, and not until they were speeding safely down the river toward their own village did Spotted Hawk turn and clasp the hand of Silver Cloud in a crushing grasp of gratitude.

II

SKY BIRD, THE IROQUOIS

SKY BIRD, the Iroquois, had heard his people tell of the wonderful country of the Chippewas; of the lakes teeming with fish, the forests filled with game, and the great mountains, the abode of the Thunder Bird. Although but a lad, Sky Bird determined to go and verify these tales. He spent a night in prayer with old Yellow Bear, the medicine-man, and at dawn he began his venturesome journey.

Sky Bird traveled leisurely, for spring had come to the wilderness and there was much to enjoy. The forest throbbed with the music of the birds; the balmy air was heavy with the fragrance of wild flowers, and the river was packed with fish. The Great Spirit had filled the world with blessings, and the appreciative young Iroquois raised his hands toward the heavens and gave thanks.

He traveled boldly along beside the river,

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for he was in the hunting-grounds of his people and there was nothing to fear. A red-tailed hawk circled above the trees, and Sky Bird stopped to watch it. As its harsh cry reached his ears he shook his bow and called a greeting.

"Ah, my brother, you, too, know that the world is good. Go in peace, and tell your people that you have seen the mighty warrior, Sky Bird."

At the end of the day he surprised a doe drinking at the river. He could have pierced the helpless creature with his arrows, but he refrained. Sky Bird knew that at this season she had a fawn concealed somewhere in the forest, and he spared her life. He whistled, and the doe raised her head and looked for the danger. The great ears were thrust forward, and the sensitive nose was raised into the wind. She found the danger scent and fled into the forest. The Iroquois laughed and called after her:

"Go, my sister, and tell your young one that the mighty warrior, Sky Bird, has spared your life."

Darkness was creeping on, and Sky Bird entered the forest and made a small fire. He cleaned and cooked two squirrels, which he had killed with his arrows. Then, after he

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had eaten, he returned to the river to watch and to listen.

Wrapping his robe closely about him, the alert young Iroquois concealed himself in the heavy shadows at the edge of the timber. The night was calm and still, and he turned his eyes to the wide lane of star-studded sky above the river. Dreamily he traced the misty white trail which led to the Spirit Land. Then a fish jumped, and his thoughts were diverted. He lowered his eyes to the river. The heavens were reflected in its tranquil depths. Was there also a spirit trail beneath the water? He wondered. In the distance an owl hooted. A lynx screamed from the opposite shore. Then a bird sang a wonderful night song. And then, except for the peaceful sougning of the breeze in the pine-tops, all was quiet. Sky Bird rose and went to his fire.

The night passed without alarm, and at sunrise he resumed his journey. As he continued, the river became narrower, and he entered a splendid forest of spruce and pine. Sky Bird believed he was at the border of the Chippewa hunting-grounds, and he became more cautious. He had planned to follow the river to its source, and to spend a day or so hunting through the region about its headwaters.

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Late in the day, as he was climbing a hardwood ridge, he saw many little birch-bark receptacles fastened to the trees. The truth instantly flashed into his mind, and his heart began to beat wildly. He had come upon a camp of Chippewa sap-gatherers. Sky Bird recalled the stories his father had told of the ceremony which the Chippewas conducted each spring. Realizing his peril, the young Iroquois hurried to the summit of the ridge. He saw what appeared to be a large swamp at the base of the opposite slope. But before he had begun to descend an arrow hummed past his head and the Chippewa war-cry rang in his ears.

Aware that he had been discovered by one of the sap-gatherers, Sky Bird retreated toward the swamp. The warning cry of his discoverer was answered by shouts from farther along the ridge, and the Iroquois knew that the entire party of Chippewas would join in his pursuit. He felt more confident when he gained the border of the swamp, and he lost little time in burying himself deep in its isolated confines.

The Chippewas, however, were determined to transform his shelter into a trap, and, instead of following him, they scattered and surrounded the swamp. As their cries sounded

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on all sides of him, Sky Bird's heart filled with despair. He realized that he had blundered; he should have retreated toward the river. But it was too late for regrets, and he looked about him for a hiding-place. Sheltering himself between two fallen trees, he fitted an arrow to his bow and waited for his pursuers.

As the light finally faded and darkness settled beneath the trees his hopes revived. He realized, however, that to escape capture or death he must leave his hiding-place and reach the river. Sky Bird was about to make the attempt, when he heard sounds which aroused his suspicions and caused him to hesitate. He heard the call of an owl behind him, and an answering signal from his right. Then a twig snapped nearer at hand, and the Iroquois knew that one of the searchers was approaching.

Sky Bird crept from between the trees and stole away in the direction of the river. He moved with the stealth and caution of a lynx, for he realized that the slightest sound would betray him. The hoarse yapping of a fox sounded directly in front of him, and he stopped. He waited until he had allowed the searcher sufficient time to pass on, and then he altered his course and continued his perilous retreat. He had not gone far, however,

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before he was again halted by the sound of subdued voices. He sheltered himself behind a tree and listened. The speakers were approaching. Sky Bird held his breath as three dim forms passed within bow-length of him. When they had gone a sudden weakness seized him and he began to tremble violently. He realized that he had escaped death by the narrowest margin, and, as this was his first war trail, the thought unnerved him. But a moment later he drove the fear from his heart and resumed his way.

The young Iroquois finally reached the border of the swamp in safety, and, elated at his success, he turned and shook his bow at the enemies he had outwitted. His triumph was short-lived, however, for at that instant the Chippewa war-cry rang through the night and Sky Bird was thrown to the ground. He found himself in the clutches of a giant, and his struggle was useless. Sinewy fingers closed about his throat, and, realizing that further resistance might bring on his death, the Iroquois lad surrendered.

Having subdued his young captive, the Chippewa gave him to understand that an attempt to escape would end fatally. Then he called his companions, and Sky Bird was surrounded by a group of jeering warriors.

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Some of them spoke the Iroquois dialect, and Sky Bird was sharply questioned. However, he refused to reply to their insults and pretended to misunderstand most of their questions.

The Chippewas took their prisoner to a temporary camp beside the river. He saw a number of old squaws boiling sap, and as they caught sight of him they began to cackle gleefully. Sky Bird knew that a fierce and bloody feud of long standing existed between these people and the Iroquois, and he had little doubt that he would be made to suffer for it. His captors led him into the firelight, so that the entire camp might look upon him. But Sky Bird stood the ordeal manfully, with head erect, eyes blazing defiance, and a scornful smile on his face. Only when a youth ran forward and struck him with a stick did he lose control of himself. Then he became so threatening that a warrior crossed his hands behind his back and bound them together with buckskin.

That night Sky Bird slept in the center of a circle of Chippewa warriors. A chilling vapor rose from the river, and the Iroquois missed the genial warmth of his covering; his captor had confiscated both his weapons and his robe. He rolled nearer the glowing embers

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of the camp-fire, and several Chippewas raised their heads suspiciously. Sky Bird realized that for the present escape was impossible. What they might do with him the following day he had no idea. Perhaps they would keep him as a prisoner, with the idea of eventually adopting him into the tribe; perhaps they would revenge themselves for many stinging defeats at the hands of his people.

Sky Bird awakened at daylight, and found the camp astir. While the squaws cooked the morning meal the warriors gathered in council, a short distance from the prisoner. The young Iroquois believed he was the subject of their discussion. Possibly they were deciding his fate.

He sat up and looked about him. The river was within bow-shot, and he knew there must be canoes drawn up along the shore. Sky Bird determined to dash for the water at the first opportunity. He believed they would unbind his hands to allow him to eat, and if they did he would make his daring attempt at escape. Then he realized that he had no weapons. Without them he would be entirely at the mercy of his pursuers. But even this fact did not weaken his bold resolve.

At the call of an old squaw the warriors ended the talk and walked toward the fire.

SKY BIRD, THE IROQUOIS

Two turned aside and sat down beside the prisoner. A squaw brought them food and they ate heartily, while Sky Bird watched them with hungry eyes. He wondered if they intended to weaken him by starvation. But when all had partaken of the food his guards motioned him to rise and go to the fire. Then they freed his hands and commanded him to eat. But half a score of alert warriors kept guard over him, and his carefully planned stratagem came to naught.

When he had eaten his scanty ration they again bound his hands behind him, and Sky Bird realized that his opportunity had passed. Then four warriors led him toward the river, and the Iroquois knew that they had been detailed to take him to the Chippewa village and deliver him to the chief. He went willingly, as he hoped for an opportunity to escape before they reached their destination.

The captive saw two canoes in readiness for the journey, and others drawn up on the shore. Sky Bird seated himself in the center of the first canoe, and was paddled up the river. The second canoe followed them, a paddle-length in the rear. The current was sluggish, and as there were no rapids they made good headway.

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At the end of the day they went ashore, and, much to Sky Bird's delight, they unbound his hands and commanded him to gather wood for the fire. As he went about his task, however, he was followed by one of his captors, who watched his every move and held an arrow ready for instant use. The temptation was a strong one, and the Iroquois trembled with eagerness. Several times he sought to lead his guard from the sight of his companions, but each time he was called back.

Then, when all hope of escape had gone, his opportunity came. A deer flashed into view and the Chippewa yielded to temptation and sent his arrow through its heart. Before he could draw another arrow from his quiver Sky Bird threw himself upon him. He felled him with a heavy piece of wood, and, securing his bow and most of his arrows, he fled into the forest before the other Chippewas recovered from their amazement.

When he believed he had gained a safe lead, Sky Bird circled back toward the camp he had left at sunrise. He traveled steadily throughout the night, and at daylight he came in sight of his goal. The Iroquois wondered if his baffled pursuers had returned to give warning of his escape. He doubted, for he believed

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they would make a thorough search before exposing themselves to censure and ridicule. His heart filled with hope as he saw the warriors leave the camp. He knew they were going to gather sap and would not return until the end of the day.

Believing himself safe, Sky Bird hastened to the river, and, concealed from the camp, he ran boldly to the canoes. He launched the first one and was about to step into it when he heard a warning cry from the top of the bank. He looked up and saw a squaw waving wildly toward the camp. Her screams were redoubled as he sent the canoe into the current and shook his bow. Then as he paddled rapidly down the river he heard a wild chorus of shouts and shrieks, and he knew that the squaws were calling back the warriors.

However, by the time they had returned and started in pursuit of him, Sky Bird was a long distance on his journey. In spite of their efforts they were unable to overtake him, and, being afraid to follow him into Iroquois territory, the second day they abandoned the pursuit.

At sunset Sky Bird rose proudly in the Chippewa canoe and sounded the Iroquois war-cry, for he was in sight of his own village.

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The people hurried to the river, and welcomed him with shouts of approval. That night he told his story at the council fire, and the Iroquois sang and danced until daylight to celebrate his victory over the Chippewas.

III

THE GRATITUDE OF LAME DEER

THE weird, quavering cry of a loon echoed through the night, and Spotted Beaver stopped his canoe to listen. He waited some moments before the call was repeated, and then he again heard it on the opposite side of the lake. It roused his suspicions and filled him with alarm, for he feared it was a signal. Dipping his paddle noiselessly into the water, he pushed his canoe into the heavy shadows at the edge of the shore. Then he waited anxiously to learn if his fears were real.

In a few moments an answering cry rose through the night, a short distance ahead of him. The lad's keen ears told him that it was a counterfeit, and his heart bounded at the thought. He realized that his fears were true—he was in the midst of his enemies, the Iroquois. For a moment the idea filled him with panic. He knew that he was in much peril and that he must use great caution

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to escape capture and death at the hands of his foes.

Spotted Beaver was undecided just what to do. If he remained on the lake until daylight he felt quite sure he would be discovered. On the other hand, to attempt to retrace his course seemed equally dangerous. The lad was in a frenzy of doubt. He realized that every moment of delay increased his peril, for the night was more than half gone and daylight might betray him to his foes. The young Delaware knew, therefore, that whatever he decided to do must be done at once.

Having determined to hide somewhere along the edge of the lake, Spotted Beaver paddled cautiously along in the shelter of the shadows from the forest. He had not gone far when he heard an owl hooting, a short distance back in the woods, and he stopped in alarm. Perhaps it was another signal. However, as he heard it a second time he was assured that the call was genuine, and he proceeded on his way. A short distance beyond he heard a twig snap close to the water, and again he stopped to listen. Although he strained his ears to catch the first warning of danger, he heard nothing but the night-wind sighing through the trees. Convinced, therefore, that

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the sound had been made by some four-footed night prowler of the wilderness, the lad dismissed his fears.

Spotted Beaver had not taken five paddle-strokes, however, before a canoe flashed out of the darkness and crashed into his own. He was promptly capsized, and before he could rise to his feet in the shallow water he found himself overpowered by several stalwart Iroquois warriors. They pulled him to his knees and bound his arms behind him. Then they led him to the shore.

A fire was lighted, and its light showed Spotted Beaver that he was in the hands of a large war-party. Judging from the calls and signals which were rising from all parts of the lake, the captive knew that many other warriors were scattered through the woods. It was evident that the Iroquois believed he was without friends in the vicinity, as they made no attempt to conceal themselves. Spotted Beaver felt quite sure, therefore, that he had been discovered and followed earlier in the day. He had little hope of saving his life, for he knew full well the enmity that existed between his own tribe and the people into whose hands he had fallen. He felt quite confident that, once the absent members of the war-party arrived, his tortures would begin.

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As if to give reality to his fears, his captors began to taunt and abuse him. Several struck him across the face with their open palms, but Spotted Beaver maintained a stolid indifference. The courageous lad scorned to exhibit either wrath or fear in the presence of his enemies, for he knew that to lose his self-control would be fatal.

Unable to aggravate him, his tormentors finally left him in the care of two evil-looking guards and withdrew to hold a council. The talk was fast and animated, and as the speakers turned angry threatening glances upon the captive, the latter believed that his fate was the topic of discussion. He watched them anxiously, and from their manner he felt quite certain that his doom was sealed. Spotted Beaver felt almost sure that death at the torture-stake would be his penalty for venturing into their domain.

While the Iroquois were still in the midst of their heated discussion, the other members of the war-party began to appear. As each new arrival took his place in the council circle the talk was begun anew, and Spotted Beaver began to wonder whether his captors intended to spend the balance of the night arguing upon his fate. He was surprised to learn the great strength of the Iroquois war-party, for he had

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supposed himself in danger from only a few scattered hunters. He realized, therefore, that he had approached nearer to the Iroquois village than he had intended, and he saw the folly of having ventured upon such a perilous journey alone. However, it was too late for regrets, and he felt that he must nerve himself to make the best of his unfortunate predicament.

When the council was finally adjourned Spotted Beaver was given to understand that he was to be spared until the following day. Thankful for even this brief respite, the unhappy lad lay down between two of his captors, and soon pretended to fall asleep. However, his alert brain continued to search for a way to aid him out of his difficulty.

With the first hint of dawn the Iroquois were astir, and Spotted Beaver felt certain that they were preparing to take him to the Iroquois village. He had little doubt that, once he arrived there, his death would be only a matter of moments. However, the thought was soon driven from his mind, for at that instant his two guards approached and cut the buckskin thongs which bound his ankles. Then, cuffing him about the head and face with their open hands, they ordered him to rise. The pain in his legs was intense, for the

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buckskin had been drawn so tight that circulation had been stopped. Now, as the congested blood forced its way through the clogged veins, the youthful captive suffered extreme agony. Aware of his plight, the two warriors forced him to jump and stamp his feet, and laughed in glee as they saw his torture appear in his face.

Then the helpless lad was taken to the fire, where great pieces of half-cooked meat were forced into his mouth, greatly to the amusement of the company. He managed to pass through the ordeal without choking, and then, after having been struck and otherwise annoyed by his jeering captors, he was led to the lake. The Iroquois canoes were drawn up along the shore, and Spotted Beaver was commanded to enter one of them. When he had taken his place the entire company departed for the Iroquois village.

The water sparkled in the glorious sunlight, birds sang at the edge of the woods, fish played before the canoes, and the paddlers sang and laughed with light-hearted gaiety. All the world seemed happy, and the young Delaware realized that he was alone in his despair. He thought of the previous day, when he, too, had been free and happy. Now he was a prisoner on the way to his death,

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The thought depressed him and overwhelmed his heart with sadness. He wondered if he would be lamented by his tribe. He felt certain that his aged father, Big Otter, would mourn for him, and his younger brother, too, whom he loved dearly, would surely miss him. The thought suddenly filled him with a desire to live, for the world seemed very beautiful.

Then sterner thoughts took possession of his mind, and he despised himself as one lacking both wisdom and courage. He remembered the previous winter when he had rescued a disabled young Iroquois from a pack of wolves that had surrounded him on the open ice of the river. He recalled how he had spared the life of his hereditary foe and, having nursed him back to strength, had given him food and his own warm robe, and sent him safely home to his people. Now he regretted the gallant deed. How simple he had been!

He should have done as his people did, and as the Iroquois did, as they now intended to do with him—kill an enemy whenever and wherever the opportunity occurred. He laughed at his weakness. This was his thanks for saving the life of a hated foe. The same people, friends of the very one whom he had saved, were now carrying him to their village,

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that the entire tribe might share in his tortures and death. He had been as lacking in wisdom as a papoose, as weak as a woman, and now he would pay the penalty.

Then the warriors who shared the canoe with him began to taunt him. They laughed fiendishly as they described the horrors awaiting him once he reached their village, and told how he would die crying for mercy. When the unhappy captive smiled scornfully, one of the warriors struck him a stinging blow across the head with his paddle.

Only the savage glare in his eyes gave warning of the rage which had been kindled in the Delaware's heart. He turned slowly and looked fearlessly into the eyes of the man who had struck him. Spotted Beaver knew better than to do more. To have given way to his anger would have exposed him to still more vicious treatment at the hands of his guards.

When they finally arrived at the Iroquois village the youthful captive was dragged roughly from the canoe and hustled to the center of the camp. The news of his arrival soon spread and in a few moments he was surrounded by the excited occupants of the village. They shouted insults, shook their fists in his face, and, aware of his helplessness, began to strike and abuse him. Then they

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suddenly fell back and opened a path for a tall, dignified warrior who made his way to the prisoner. Confronting the undaunted Delaware, the Iroquois gazed intently into his face, and then he laughed contemptuously and walked away.

From the manner and dress of the warrior who had just approached him Spotted Beaver believed that he was a person of great importance, and he wondered if he were the famous Iroquois chief, Thunder Cloud, of whom he had heard so many wonderful tales.

The Iroquois called his warriors in council, and Spotted Beaver was left under guard of two young braves who took keen satisfaction in annoying him. Finding their taunts and insults of no avail, they began to beat and maul him. One of them even attempted to poke his fingers into the eyes of the helpless captive. Spotted Beaver's hands were tightly bound behind him, but his feet were free, and, driven into a wild rage, he raised his leg and thrust his foot in the pit of his annoyer's stomach with such force that he sent him sprawling.

Bounding to his feet in a fury, the enraged Iroquois sprang toward Spotted Beaver, intending to drive his upraised knife into his heart. Before he could commit the deed, how-

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ever, the alert chief, who had been an amused spectator, leaped forward with the agility of a panther and threw the astonished youth to the ground. Thoroughly crestfallen and ashamed at this second humiliation in the eyes of his friends, the young warrior rose and slunk away.

However, if the unfortunate prisoner hoped to gain a respite by this bold act he was doomed to disappointment, for a new guard was immediately appointed to watch him. This warrior, a great, stalwart fellow, apparently intended to profit by the misfortune of his predecessor, for he produced a long coil of rawhide and proceeded to bind the captive's feet. When he had completed the task with unnecessary severity, he threw Spotted Beaver to the ground, where he lay helpless.

Emboldened by his plight, the squaws led the children to him and urged them to beat him with small sticks. They laughed in great glee at the sport, and no doubt would have eventually blinded and perhaps even killed him had not the chief again interfered in his behalf. That stern warrior dispersed the tormentors and apparently made it plain to the two guards that their prisoner was not to be further annoyed.

Soon afterward the discussion came to an

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end, and as the Iroquois showed unmistakable signs of suppressed excitement, Spotted Beaver feared that he was about to receive the punishment that had been imposed upon him. The warriors left their places in the council and began to circle about him, singing their war-songs and shaking their weapons over his prostrate form. Spotted Beaver endured it all with great calmness, for he was determined to show the boastful Iroquois that the Delawares were not to be intimidated by the threat of torture and death.

Finding that their threats were unavailing against this stout-hearted young warrior, the Iroquois dragged him nearer the fire and tied him to a great log which had been set upright in the ground. Undismayed by this suggestive hint of what was in store for him, Spotted Beaver smiled a bold defiance at the frenzied warriors who were yelling and dancing about him. They bade him speak, that they might know if he was a man, but he refused the invitation with scorn. Enraged by his calm indifference, they began to threaten him with their knives. The warrior whom he had kicked made several vicious lunges within a few inches of the captive's throat. The lad met his eyes unflinchingly, however, and the Iroquois were compelled to admire his courage.

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Then they left him, and Spotted Beaver wondered what his next ordeal would be. In a few moments he saw the Iroquois chief approaching him. The young Delaware was a handsome lad, and he saw the Iroquois gazing with approval at his lithe and sinewy figure. Then this distinguished warrior began to speak to him in the Delaware dialect.

The Iroquois told Spotted Beaver that it was foolish to venture alone into the country of his enemies, and he assured him that he could expect no mercy. He told the lad that what he had already borne was not to be compared with the tortures which were still reserved for him. He warned him that the hearts of the Iroquois were very black against the "Delaware dogs," and that their wrath would be poured out upon the unfortunate captive in their possession. He reminded him that as yet he was practically unhurt, but that in a short time he would be terribly maimed and wounded, but that death would not come to his relief until the Iroquois had forced him to cringe before them and plead for mercy. Then they would laugh at his cowardice and would cut him to pieces with their knives and feed his body to their dogs. Having made these sinister threats, the chief ceased speaking, and glared threateningly into

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the face of the prisoner to note the effect of his words.

Spotted Beaver remained unmoved. He waited some moments to convince the Iroquois of his indifference, and then he replied. He said that he had heard many boastful threats, but that to a Delaware they were like the idle prattle of a papoose. He declared that Spotted Beaver laughed at them. He reminded him that Delaware hearts were strong, like the rocks; that one might split them piece by piece, but that the strongest man could not break them. He promised to laugh at their efforts to make him yield, and to die singing the war-song of his people. He boasted that never yet had a Delaware asked mercy of an Iroquois. Then he said he was ready, and, laughing mockingly, he invited them to begin the torture.

For some moments after this fearless reply the Iroquois remained silent, but the heaving of his bosom, the contraction of his eyes, and the swelling of the muscles in his powerful neck all gave timely warning of the wrath which had been kindled in his heart. He waited until he had regained control of himself, and then he again addressed the prisoner. He said that he was none other than the great chief Thunder Cloud. He declared that his

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people obediently accepted his counsel and faithfully followed his orders. Thunder Cloud again warned Spotted Beaver that the hearts of the Iroquois were black with anger. Then he proceeded to unfold a malicious plot for using the lad as a spy and a traitor against his own people. In return for his infidelity the Iroquois chief promised him life, liberty, and adoption into the tribe. He told his story with great cleverness, gradually leading up to the part Spotted Beaver was expected to play in return for his freedom.

Thunder Cloud said that many years ago he had been at war with a large band of Delawares who were led by a famous chief. He boasted that in almost every battle the Iroquois had been successful, and he declared that many Delaware scalps hung in the great Iroquois medicine-lodge. Thunder Cloud explained that the Delaware chief finally organized a very large war-party and raided the Iroquois camp, recovering the scalps of his own people and carrying away many Iroquois scalps in revenge, including those of the speaker's father and brother. The Iroquois chief declared that he had led many war-parties against the Delaware village, but the wily Delaware chief always learned of his coming in time to lead his people from the

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danger. He said the name of the famous old chief was Big Otter, and that he would give power and wealth to the warrior who would bring him the scalp of his hated rival. He promised, therefore, to give Spotted Beaver his freedom and a position of prominence in the Iroquois council circle if he would entice the old chief and a company of his warriors into ambush, so that the Iroquois might slay them. He told the lad he would wait until sunset for his answer.

For some moments Spotted Beaver remained speechless, while his flashing eyes threatened the speaker. Then, fairly trembling with rage, he hurled his answer at the astounded Iroquois chief. He told him that he, Spotted Beaver, was the son of that famous Delaware chief, Big Otter. He boasted that at that very moment the latter probably was leading a great war-party to rescue his son. The lad warned his foe that the Delawares would speedily annihilate the entire Iroquois camp. Then he laughed at the Iroquois's threats, and ridiculed the offer of the noted chief as the prattle of a papoose. Spotted Beaver got no further with his reply, for the enraged Iroquois snatched a war-club from the hands of a warrior and struck the Delaware a blow which rendered him insensible.

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When the prisoner finally regained his senses he found himself surrounded by the entire company of warriors, who seemed to be anxiously awaiting his return to consciousness. It was evident that they intended to make him pay dearly for his insult to their chief. The wily young Delaware instantly closed his eyes and feigned unconsciousness, but the sharp-witted Iroquois were not so easily fooled. They had already freed him from the stake, and now they dragged him to his feet and rushed him to the spot chosen for his execution.

Spotted Beaver realized that his end was close at hand, and he rallied his confused senses and nerved himself to die as one of his people should die—as his venerable father, whom even Thunder Cloud feared, would have him die—like a man. Therefore, when the Iroquois had ceased to push him about, he drew himself up proudly and faced his foes with scorn and courage. His fearless glance rested on each face in the wild assemblage, and the Iroquois read his hate in his eyes.

Then the Delaware turned his attention upon a new-comer, who seemed to have just entered the village. He was a lad about the age of Spotted Beaver himself, and as he caught sight of the captive he crowded eagerly

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forward, with his keen black eyes fixed intently on those of the prisoner. As he drew near, Spotted Beaver's heart gave a great bound of hope, for he recognized him as Lame Deer, the young Iroquois whom he had rescued from the wolves.

The new arrival went directly to Thunder Cloud and engaged the Iroquois chief in earnest conversation. From the unrestrained, familiar manner in which he talked with the older warrior Spotted Beaver believed that Lame Deer was a person of some importance. There was nothing in his manner, however, to indicate any interest in the captive, and the young Delaware had been too well schooled in the art of diplomacy to proclaim his recognition of the lad whose appearance had filled him with hope.

Lame Deer had just returned from a mission for his father, Thunder Cloud. Arriving at the village after an absence of five days, he had seen at once that something of importance was taking place. Learning that his people were about to put a Delaware prisoner to the torture, the lad had hurried forward to have a look at the unhappy captive. Then, to his despair, he had suddenly recognized the prisoner as the loyal young Delaware who had saved his life. On that occasion Lame

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Deer had pledged undying friendship to his rescuer, and he now realized that the opportunity to repay the debt was at hand. Therefore Lamé Deer determined to save the Delaware and send him safely away to his own people.

However, the wily young Iroquois knew the folly of making a direct appeal in the prisoner's behalf, and he determined to rely upon diplomacy. He felt equally confident that it would be useless to connect Spotted Beaver with the story of his rescue from the wolves. At this time his father would not listen, and it would be impossible to convince the people that the tale was true. They were mad with excitement and seemed determined to visit their hatred upon the helpless young captive, who was awaiting his end with the calm stoicism of his race. Lamé Deer realized that he must act quickly to save him.

While he was making inquiries from his father, therefore, the quick-witted lad was searching his brain for a way to help his friend. At last he hit upon a scheme. It was bold and hazardous, and exposed the Delaware to great peril, but even if it failed it offered Spotted Beaver a sure and speedy death in place of the tortures which were awaiting him.

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The warriors were already complaining of the delay, and demanding new tortures for the prisoner. Some were beating and pricking him with their knives. Lame Deer realized that there was not a moment to spare, for the people were in a frenzy and Spotted Beaver had been cut and bruised. Therefore, the loyal young warrior determined to act. War-club in hand, he rushed wrathfully toward the captive and began to insult and abuse him, while his eyes flashed a message which the Delaware was quick to interpret. Spotted Beaver quickly seized the opportunity which the other offered him. In a loud voice he hurled a defiant challenge at Lame Deer, and struggled violently at his bonds as though he would strike the object of his apparent hate. Several warriors sprang forward menacingly, but before they could harm the prisoner Lame Deer's club had descended and knocked Spotted Beaver to the ground.

The Iroquois were now beside themselves with fury and would certainly have hacked Spotted Beaver to pieces as he lay helpless before them, but the son of their chief barred their way and demanded to be heard. He had planned this trick to gain time, and so far he had been successful. As the crafty young Delaware pretended unconsciousness, there-

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fore, his youthful ally began a bold harangue to the warriors. He began by abusing the Delaware, and promising to take terrible vengeance as soon as the latter awakened from his sleep. Lame Deer professed to be sorry for having allowed his wrath to interfere with the plans of his people, but he asked if there was one among them who would not have done likewise upon receiving such insults from a "Delaware dog." He apparently roused himself into a frenzy, and even stooped and struck the prostrate form of the captive. Lame Deer claimed the right to be the first to attack the prisoner, because of his own humiliation at the hands of the Delaware. He said that as soon as the captive was able to stand before them that he, Lame Deer, would inflict such punishment as they had never witnessed. He drove his tomahawk deep into the painted post. Then he stooped and shook his knife before the upturned face of Spotted Beaver, promising to cut out the insulting tongue of the captive and feed it to the dogs. In fact, he acted his part so well that he completely fooled the people and gained his object. They agreed, therefore, to leave the captive in his charge, with the understanding that Lame Deer would bring him to the torture-stake when they demanded it.

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Spotted Beaver still continued to feign unconsciousness. Fearful that Lame Deer might have killed him, and thus put an end to their sport, the Iroquois summoned one of their medicine-men to revive the prisoner. The man of mystery went through a very solemn ceremony in an effort to rouse the captive, but his efforts were, of course, in vain. Then the warriors became enraged, and Lame Deer had difficulty in restraining them from driving their arrows into the prostrate form. At last, after much valiant pleading, he persuaded them to wait until the following day at sunrise, when they warned him they would attack the captive without further delay. Thankful for even this brief delay, Lame Deer told them that at that time he would deliver the prisoner into their hands.

Soon afterward Lame Deer carried Spotted Beaver into his own lodge, and when he was sure that there was no one spying upon them he bade the Delaware open his eyes. The grateful lad obeyed the command, and then they conversed in low, guarded whispers, for Lame Deer fortunately understood the Delaware dialect. He warned Spotted Beaver that it would be foolhardy to attempt to leave the camp during the night, as he had already reconnoitered, and found the village sur-

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rounded by sentinels. Lame Deer said that even if he should escape, which was most improbable, then the people would immediately accuse the son of their chief and bring humiliation and disgrace upon Thunder Cloud himself. Then, having compelled Spotted Beaver to promise that he would neither lead a war-party to the Iroquois village or venture into their territory alone, Lame Deer outlined his daring plan to gain the Delaware his freedom.

He said that at sunrise, which was now but a short time off, the people would congregate before the lodge and demand the prisoner. Then he planned to lead him out and take him to the center of the village. He promised Spotted Beaver that he would loose the buckskin thongs about his wrists, and told him as they neared the torture-stake to free his hands, knock him down with his own war-club, and flee for the river. Lame Deer told him where to find a canoe containing paddles, a robe, and sufficient food for the journey to his own people. He assured Spotted Beaver that once he gained the canoe he would be comparatively safe, for he had dragged the other canoes into the bushes and had concealed the paddles. This would delay the pursuers, and they would, no doubt,

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blame the deed upon the boys of the tribe as one of their thoughtless bits of mischief. Before Lame Deer loosed Spotted Beaver's bonds, however, he reminded him that he was giving him no weapons because he did not wish him to kill any of his people, and he warned him that if, even to save himself from capture, he should kill an Iroquois, Lame Deer himself would avenge the deed.

When the sun finally appeared above the horizon the people hurried to the lodge to demand the prisoner. Lame Deer pushed aside the bear-skin which concealed the entrance and dragged Spotted Beaver from the lodge. There was a joyous shout as the Iroquois saw that the Delaware stood before them, strong and defiant. They crowded forward to take him from his guard, but Lame Deer motioned toward the stake, and began to push the Delaware before him. The warriors followed, singing their war-songs and shouting direful threats at the captive. Some boys ran forward to annoy the prisoner with sharpened sticks, but Lame Deer drove them away and hurried Spotted Beaver toward the center of the camp.

A moment later the Iroquois were dumfounded as the Delaware, miraculously freed from his bonds, whirled upon his guard, struck

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him to earth with his own club, and dashed for the river. The trick was entirely successful, and Lame Deer retained his reeling senses long enough to roll deliberately under the feet of the foremost pursuers, who fell in a confused mass on top of him. He felt other runners falling over those already down, and then he heard the twang of bows, and he knew that Spotted Beaver was some distance away. Then all became black and he lay unconscious.

With the slight start and an open path Spotted Beaver was able to reach the river far enough in advance of the Iroquois to launch the canoe and paddle some distance from shore before the foremost pursuers reached the edge of the water. Then arrows began to sing past on both sides of him and several dropped into the canoe. The lad put all his strength into his paddle-strokes and sprinted to gain the middle of the river. In the mean time the infuriated Iroquois had discovered the loss of their paddles. They were unable to find them anywhere, and while some of the warriors dashed back to the village to make inquiries, others entered the canoes and attempted to propel them through the water with poles. They made slight headway, and Spotted Beaver was soon out of

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range of their arrows. He continued his exertions, however, for he knew that at any moment they might find the paddles, and with two or three sturdy warriors in a canoe they would be quite sure to overtake him. But Lame Deer had hidden the paddles with rare skill, and the Delaware had already passed from sight when the first of them were found.

Unable to use the canoes, many of the Iroquois ran along the shore in a frantic effort to keep the Delaware in sight. Those who had found paddles were now racing wildly up the river in pursuit. They were far behind the fugitive, however, and, although they worked themselves into exhaustion, they found it impossible to get within bow-shot.

Spotted Beaver kept nothing in reserve, for he realized that his only hope was in keeping out of arrow-range. Once near enough to use their bows, his pursuers would have him at their mercy. Having gained his freedom, he determined to hold his lead in the hope that his pursuers would finally grow discouraged and abandon the chase. He wondered what had become of Lame Deer. The thought caused him considerable concern. Rather than be the cause of that loyal friend's disgrace and death, Spotted Beaver would have

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returned and accepted his punishment unflinchingly. However, he had little doubt that the keen-witted young Iroquois would extricate himself from the difficulty, and he dismissed the matter from his mind and continued his flight.

When Lame Deer regained his senses, he found himself lying upon a great bear-robe in his father's lodge. An old squaw sat beside him, and as he opened his eyes she rose and sprinkled some herbs over him, while she sang a medicine-song to drive the evil spirits from his brain. For some moments the lad was unable to recall what had happened, and he asked the squaw to tell him how he came to be in his present state of helplessness. The old woman then told of the daring escape of the prisoner, and how Lame Deer had been nearly killed with his own club. The wily lad forced back a smile as the superstitious squaw told how the people believed that the evil spirits had loosed the prisoner from his bonds and carried him away to the Delaware camp.

On the second night after the escape the last of the pursuers returned and announced that they had been unable to overtake the Delaware. They questioned every lad in the village about the concealed paddles, but, of

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course, found no one upon whom to fasten the blame. Then Thunder Cloud made a lengthy speech and warned his people that the Delawares were protected by many evil spirits. He said that whenever they took another Delaware captive they must kill him at once. Looking sharply at his son, the Iroquois chief cautioned the lad to remember his treatment at the hands of the "Delaware dog."

"Lame Deer, the son of the great chief Thunder Cloud, never forgets," the young warrior replied, simply.

IV

THE REDEMPTION OF JUMPING FOX

NIGHT had fallen upon the Iroquois country. A great, yellow moon rose slowly above the top of the pines and shed its radiance upon the river. Then a bark canoe emerged from the shadows and moved swiftly down the path of light. A moment later another canoe followed closely in the wake of the first, and behind the second came a third. Noiselessly, like grim, silent phantoms of the dark, they drifted along with the current. Two sinewy paddlers sat in each canoe. No sound accompanied the dipping of their paddles, not a word passed between them. As easily and as noiselessly as floating feathers the canoes drifted, bow foremost, upon the gravelly beach.

Six sturdy Iroquois warriors rose and stepped stiffly ashore. They kicked vigorously for a moment or so to free their limbs from cramp, and then they drew the canoes

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from the water. A few words were exchanged in a guarded undertone, and two of the warriors immediately disappeared into the forest. The others seated themselves in the shadows to await the return of the scouts. When the latter returned, the little company went into council. For some time the six warriors sat close together, apparently discussing something of importance. At last they reached an agreement. Then they rose, dragged the canoes to the edge of the forest, and crawled beneath them to sleep.

At dawn a flock of ducks rose from the river and hurried away on whistling wings. The noise roused the Iroquois, who carried their canoes to the water and resumed their journey. Before them was a long lane of white-crested rapids, and in a few moments the frail canoes were racing wildly through the perilous stretch of curling billows. The alert paddlers crouched in their places, keeping vigilant watch to avoid the sinister black rocks which dotted their course and threatened them with destruction. Rising, plunging, careening, each frail bark was guided skilfully down the center of the treacherous, narrow channel, and came safely to rest in the quiet water beyond.

Soon afterward the Iroquois went ashore.

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Leaving one of their number to guard the canoes, the rest of the company separated, and began a careful reconnaissance. Crouching low to the ground, they coursed through the bushes like wolves on the scent of a deer. From their action it was evident that they were seeking a trail. Their efforts were vain, however, for not a pebble had been displaced, not a track was visible. Apparently disappointed, the Iroquois entered the canoes and continued down the river.

Somewhere ahead of them was Jumping Fox, a thief and an outlaw from their own tribe. Many petty thefts had been committed in the Iroquois village, and suspicion had fallen upon the youthful fugitive. Then a search had been made, and a number of the stolen articles were found among his possessions. Aware that he had been discovered, the unfortunate youth fled from the village under cover of the dark. At dawn six warriors in three canoes started down the river in pursuit of him.

Skilled in the use of the paddle, Jumping Fox gained a substantial lead upon his tardy pursuers. The first night he traveled continuously, for he realized that the dawn would bring his people on his trail. The next day he continued without food or rest, for he

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knew that to stop would be to lose all he had gained. However, as the second night closed down, the wily lad went ashore, filled his canoe with rocks, and sank it in a deep pool. Then he gathered up his robe and his weapons and disappeared into the forest.

The night was cloudy and black, and the pursuers decided to go ashore and wait for daylight. They were uncertain as to whether they had gained or lost in the chase, and they were glum and ill at ease. With the first light of dawn, they launched the canoes and continued the search. The leading paddlers held their canoe in the center of the river, while their companions followed close to the shores.

They had gone some distance in this order when a low shout from the last canoe brought the others to a stop. The keen eyes of one of the paddlers had discovered a clue on the shore. The Iroquois landed and found the trail of their fleeing tribesman. An indistinct footprint in the moss, a few broken grass-blades, several dislodged pebbles, showed the way he had gone. Having learned that much, his pursuers began to search for the missing canoe. They looked carefully through the bushes at the edge of the water, through the undergrowth at the edge of the forest, and in

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every tangled thicket, without result. Then one of the searchers discovered something at the bottom of the pool. He threw himself prone and gazed intently into its placid depths. Then he rose and called his companions. He had discovered the rock-filled craft at the bottom of the river.

Having left the river, Jumping Fox had hurried away toward the south, in the direction of the Delaware hunting-grounds. His one idea was to place as much distance as possible between himself and his pursuers. He knew that picked scouts would be set upon his trail, and he believed that the surest way to foil them would be to enter the domains of their enemies.

Toward the end of the day the sharp-eyed trailers found evidence which led them to suspect that they had blundered into the midst of unseen foes. Many narrow moccasin trails wound through the forest, and as each Iroquois scout encountered them he halted, while his heart filled with gloomy forebodings. Of course it was possible that the Delawares used them only at frequent intervals, but a closer examination proved that the hope was false.

When darkness finally descended upon the wilderness, the Iroquois, having separated to

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search for their tribesman, determined to meet and hold a council of war. They began to signal to one another. The mournful serenade of a barred owl sounded from a wooded ridge, a fox yapped from the valley, and the weird, tremulous call of the loon rose from a distant pond.

However, the signals were heard by other ears besides those for which they were intended. A company of Delaware hunters heard them, and knew that enemies had entered their domain. Jumping Fox heard them, too, as he lay hidden for the night in the gloomy confines of an isolated swamp. The Delawares sent a runner to warn the distant village, and then they separated to search for the intruders. Jumping Fox smiled grimly and retreated farther into the swamp.

One by one the Iroquois scouts arrived at the appointed rendezvous. They immediately went into council. As they feared to betray themselves with a fire, they sat close together in the darkness and conversed in low, guarded whispers. They were all agreed that they had blundered stupidly into a clever trap which had been set for them by the fugitive Jumping Fox. They realized that the crafty youth had deliberately enticed them into the territory of their enemies. The knowledge

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that he, too, was forced to share their peril gave them little satisfaction, for they believed he would prefer death at the hands of his foes to capture and disgrace at the hands of his tribesmen. In spite of the peril which threatened them, however, the fearless Iroquois scouts determined to continue the chase, even though they might be compelled to enter the Delaware village itself. Having come to this bold decision, they sat, straining their ears to catch some sound from their enemies.

Suddenly a twig snapped within bow-shot of them, and before the startled Iroquois could rise to their feet they were attacked and speedily overpowered by a vastly superior force of Delawares. When the brief struggle was over the Iroquois found themselves helpless captives in the hands of their foes.

The Delawares had suffered much abuse at the hands of the powerful Iroquois nation. Their village had been destroyed, their women and children carried away into captivity, and their warriors and hunters tortured and killed at every opportunity. Now they had the chance to retaliate, and they determined to make the most of it. They insulted and taunted their sullen prisoners until they tired of the amusement. Then they made a fire

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and passed the balance of the night dancing and singing their war-songs.

At daylight the captives were given the freedom of their limbs. The circulation of blood through the swollen veins caused them excruciating agony, but the brave and haughty Iroquois disdained to acknowledge their suffering before the Delawares. All day they traveled through the wilderness, closely guarded by their exultant captors. There was no chance for escape, and the crafty Iroquois were too wise to make the attempt. They felt sure that they were being taken to the Delaware village, and that torture and death would be their fate soon after they arrived there. Undismayed by the certainty of their doom, they walked along with heads proudly raised, totally oblivious to the threats and jeers of their guards.

As cunning and stealthy as a hunting lynx, Jumping Fox followed on their trail. At frequent intervals he dropped to his knees and examined the ground with his hands. Then he rose and followed after his tribesmen, stealing through the timber with the stealth of a panther, bounding across the open places with the agility of a deer. A broken twig, a crushed leaf, some bark scraped from a tree, these things showed him the way. Alert and

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cautious, the daring lad followed the war-party to a point from which he saw the village and heard the wild, excited shouts of the occupants as the captives were brought into the camp.

For a long time Jumping Fox stood inactive and irresolute. He was convinced that his pursuers had fallen into the hands of their foes, and a host of conflicting emotions warred in his heart. He had little fear for himself, for he felt sure that he had escaped detection, and he knew that he could escape by carefully retracing his course. His stratagem had been successful, he had outwitted the trained warriors who had been sent to find him. The thought roused his vanity. Now he would leave those unhappy captives to their fate. He saw no reason to pity them. In fact, he took considerable satisfaction in their plight. It was his revenge for their relentless pursuit of him. Then he thought of the blood tie. The prisoners whom he was abandoning so indifferently were Iroquois warriors—his people, his brothers! He suddenly remembered that he, too, was an Iroquois, a warrior with the pure blood of many generations flowing in his veins. He was a fighter, descended from an unconquerable race of warriors. Even banishment could not rob him of his birthright—

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he was still an Iroquois! The proud boast filled his heart with pride. Then he realized that if he still claimed membership in that powerful nation he had obligations to meet, and the first was loyalty. He had long ago repented of his petty thefts, which he had committed to aid an unfortunate friend. Now, as he meditated, all malice against his tribesmen suddenly vanished. He told himself that, after all, his pursuers had only performed their duty, and he was forced to admit that he might have been one of the company had the culprit been other than himself. He began to accuse himself. He had led them into a trap—he had betrayed his own people into the hands of his foes! The accusation overwhelmed him with shame. Then a great resolve formed in his mind—he determined to redeem himself. Jumping Fox concealed himself within sight of the hostile camp, therefore, hoping that in some way he would be able to help his tribesmen.

It happened that Walking Bear, the noted Delaware chief, was absent from the village. He had set out upon a solitary hunting trip at daylight, and to return he was compelled to cross the very ridge upon which Jumping Fox had hidden himself. Late in the day, therefore, the unsuspecting hunter retraced his

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course, and came face to face with the young Iroquois. The surprise was mutual, but Jumping Fox was the first to recover his wits, and, with the advantages of youth in his favor, he was soon victorious in the brief struggle which ensued.

Under other circumstances the successful young warrior would have slain his vanquished rival without compunction, but in the present instance he believed there was more to gain by making his foe a captive. It was the work of only a few moments to bind the Delaware's hands and feet with stout strips of buckskin. Then, warning the prisoner that an outcry would end in his death, the young Iroquois sat down to formulate a plan for rescuing his comrades.

Having finally decided upon a daring bit of stratagem, Jumping Fox approached his captive. The Delaware smiled contemptuously at his youthful foe, and the latter again warned him against an outcry. Fortunately, the lad was familiar with the Delaware dialect, and even though the sullen chief professed not to understand a word of the Iroquois tongue, Jumping Fox was able to make his commands understood. Having first fitted an arrow to his bow, therefore, the Iroquois freed the captive from his bonds, and

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ordered him to walk to a spot directly above the Delaware village. Realizing that the prisoner would betray him at the first opportunity, the lad walked close behind him, ready to drive his arrow through his heart at the first hint of treachery.

Before the Delaware exhibited himself to the camp, however, Jumping Fox stopped him and briefly described the plan, which was to use the captive as a means to rescue the Iroquois prisoners. In concluding, the lad warned the prisoner that his life depended upon the success with which he played his part, and threatened to drive his arrow into the Delaware's heart if he attempted to betray him. Then he asked the unhappy chief if he was ready to play the rôle in return for his life. For one moment Walking Bear maintained a sullen silence, and finally signified his acceptance of the terms only because Jumping Fox had drawn his bowstring and was about to drive his arrow through the captive's body.

In the mean time the Delawares had roused themselves to a frenzy. Their one desire was to visit their wrath upon the unfortunate Iroquois who had fallen into their hands. Ordinarily they would have awaited the return of their chief before attacking their foes, but,

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having been carried away with excitement, they determined to begin the fearful ceremony without him. One of the captives was dragged to the center of the village and bound to the torture-stake. Then the Delawares formed a circle about him and began a wild, noisy dance, which the prisoner knew would speedily lead to his torture and death. At a short distance from the warriors the squaws and boys were conducting a dance of their own, while bowed and decrepit old hags cackled fiendishly and urged the most extreme penalties for the hated captives. The other prisoners, securely bound and closely guarded, had been brought forward to witness the fate of their comrade, with the hope of weakening their courage. The victim himself stood proudly erect, with a look of scorn upon his fearless face, as his merciless, hate-crazed foes circled about him, flourishing their weapons and shouting their threats.

Then an awesome hush fell upon the wild assemblage, and the dancers stood transfixed in their places. Boldly outlined on the cliff above the camp stood the erect figure of a solitary Iroquois warrior. Having attracted the attention of the people in the village, he raised his hand in token of friendship and began to talk. The captives turned their eyes

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hopefully in his direction, and recognized him at once as Jumping Fox, the outcast.

The latter addressed the Delawares in their own dialect, and assured them that the great war-chief of the powerful Iroquois nation was before them. He warned them that several hundred warriors were assembled in the forest behind him. He said that the Iroquois had come into their country on a peaceful mission and had sent the six captives forward to proclaim the approach of the great company of fighting-men. He charged the Delawares with duplicity and a desire to turn peace into war. He declared that his own warriors, having learned the fate of their comrades, had retaliated by capturing the great Delaware chief himself. To prove this bold boast Jumping Fox promised that Walking Bear would appear and speak for himself.

Amid an impressive silence the daring young Iroquois withdrew, and the captive Delaware walked to the edge of the precipice and addressed his people. He, too, accused them of breaking faith and all the sacred bonds of hospitality. He upbraided them for causing his own capture, and said it was only because of the Iroquois's great friendliness that his life had been spared. He ordered the instant release of the captives and guaranteed them a

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safe and unmolested journey out of the Delaware domains. Then he ordered all members of his own tribe to remain within the village for three days, and declared that he would accompany the Iroquois some distance on their return journey, as an evidence of his good-will.

After Walking Bear had finished speaking, and had been bound to a tree out of sight of his terrorized tribesmen, Jumping Fox shouted commands to an imaginary company of warriors. Then he again appeared before the crestfallen Delawares. His eyes lighted with triumph as he noted that the captives had already been freed. As he began to speak, they hastened from the village to join him. Encouraged by the success of his plan, the elated lad launched forth into an able speech in which he made many references to the wise words of the Delaware chief. In closing he declared that the enraged Iroquois warriors were for war, but he promised to lead them away and leave the Delaware village in peace. He warned the Delawares against permitting even a child to leave the village during the specified three days, and assured them that keen-eyed scouts would be left on guard to make sure that the command was obeyed. Jumping Fox promised the Delawares if they

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remained in the camp, as he cautioned them to do, Walking Bear would return to them unharmed on the evening of the third day; but he declared that if any one attempted to follow the great company of Iroquois warriors the Delaware chief would surely be killed. Then, as his rejoicing tribesmen had already joined him, the bold orator ceased speaking, and disappeared from view of the perplexed Delawares.

Jumping Fox and his companions hastened toward their canoes, and took Walking Bear with them. Except for the interference of Jumping Fox the unhappy Delaware would soon have met his death at the hands of the other Iroquois. When they finally came within sight of the river where their canoes were hidden, Jumping Fox freed the hands of Walking Bear and gave him his liberty. Three of the Iroquois scouts attempted to follow after the unarmed chief, but Jumping Fox recalled them and reminded them of the sacredness of an Iroquois's promise.

Several days later they arrived at their own village, and the people crowded excitedly about Jumping Fox, calling him a thief and an outcast, and demanding that he should be severely punished. The condemned lad heard them without emotion.

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That night at the council-fire the warriors who had been sent to capture the fugitive told the story of their adventure with the Delawares, and of the splendid loyalty of Jumping Fox. They said he had returned voluntarily to his people with a sorrowful heart, and they asked that he might be forgiven and reinstated in the tribe.

When these brave men had finished their appeal in behalf of the prisoner, War Dog, the famous Iroquois war-chief, went to Jumping Fox and grasped his hand. Many noted warriors followed his example. Then the war-drums were brought out, and the people danced and sang until daylight to celebrate Jumping Fox's victory over their enemies, the Delawares.

V

SINGING BEAR, THE CHIPPEWA

SINGING BEAR had heard his people, the Chippewas, tell many tales of a wonderful lake far south in the country of the Mohawks, where one might fill his canoe with the valuable pelt of the beaver. Scorning the difficulties and perils of such a journey, the daring young Chippewa determined to visit this wonderful hunting-ground. However, when he told his plans to the chief and principal warriors of the tribe, they shook their heads, and warned him that for one so young and inexperienced as he the undertaking would end in capture or death. The lad was determined, however, and at last his father supplied him with weapons and a canoe and bade him go and attempt the exploit.

The third day after leaving the Chippewa village, Singing Bear realized that he had entered the hunting-grounds of his foes, and he became doubly cautious. The day was

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more than half gone, however, before he saw anything to rouse his suspicions. Then, as he slowly paddled around a sharp bend of the river, his keen eyes discovered something skulking through the bushes which lined the shore. Instantly alert, the young Chippewa stopped his canoe and watched the forest for another sight of the mysterious object which had aroused his fears. It had entirely disappeared, and after waiting some time Singing Bear decided that it was a bear or some other prowler of the woods, and dismissed the incident from his mind.

The touch of early autumn was in the air, and the forest was painted with the vivid colors which blaze the trail of the frost king. As the birch canoe moved slowly on its way great flocks of ducks rose from sunny coves and flew rapidly down the river; a lone muskrat sat upon its muddy lodge and looked curiously at the solitary voyager; a great hawk circled above the pines, and companies of noisy jays scolded from the shore. All these things found favor in the eyes of Singing Bear. He told himself that the world was good and he was glad he was alive to enjoy it. Even the fierce and warlike Mohawks, among whom he was venturing, could not prevent him from appreciating the many things which

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the Great Spirit had placed upon the earth to please him.

Singing Bear was rudely roused from these peaceful meditations when an arrow hummed past his head and fell into the water a short distance beyond him. Aware that he was being attacked from ambush, the young Chippewa fitted an arrow to his own bow and watched the woods for a sign of his concealed foe. The latter, however, refused to show himself, and, realizing that he was exposing himself, with no chance of harming his adversary, Singing Bear retreated to the middle of the river.

Convinced that his foes had discovered him, the lad realized that he must become still more cautious. He saw that it would be folly to attempt to travel any farther in daylight, and he planned to hide by day and travel by night. He would have given much to know whether the concealed foe who had attacked him was in possession of a canoe. If he were, Singing Bear felt sure he would be speedily followed down the river.

Undismayed by the realization of his peril, the Chippewa paddled rapidly on his way. He had little doubt that some keen-eyed scout was watching from the shore, and the thought made him uneasy. Several times he fancied

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that he heard the crackling of brush, and he believed that the unseen prowler was following him along the shore. Once he saw the bushes sway, but after watching carefully he finally attributed it to a freak of the wind.

At midday Singing Bear determined to go ashore and hide himself until night came to his assistance. When he found a proper landing-place he disembarked, carried his canoe into the forest, and skilfully concealed it in a dense thicket of young hemlocks. Then he hid himself in the undergrowth and watched the river.

Some time afterward, Singing Bear's sharp ears caught the sound of subdued voices, and a few moments later he saw a canoe moving slowly down the river. It contained two Mohawk warriors, and Singing Bear realized at once that they were trailing him. Their careless, indifferent search of the shores convinced him that they supposed him still ahead of them, and the thought gave him considerable satisfaction. However, as they halted for an instant opposite the very spot where he had dragged his canoe from the water the young Chippewa's heart pounded against his ribs. He wondered whether they had discovered his hiding-place. If they had, he felt sure they would track him down and compel

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him to fight for his life. His fears proved groundless, however, for the paddlers had already resumed their way down the river. After they had gone Singing Bear continued to watch, fearing that other canoes might appear at any moment. When none came he decided that the two Mohawk warriors were alone, and the thought somewhat reassured him.

Then the perplexed young Chippewa began to wonder if it was one of the warriors who had just passed that had attempted to kill him from ambush. If that were the case, why had only one arrow been discharged at him? And inasmuch as those warriors had a canoe, why had they not come boldly forth and given him battle with the odds greatly in their favor? He was at a loss to understand it. He began to doubt that the warriors he had just seen were the foes who had attacked him. The doubt suggested all sorts of perplexing possibilities. Perhaps the Mohawks who had gone down the river had no inkling of what had happened. On the other hand, they might have met the foe who had made the attempt on his life and been cautioned that the bold intruder was somewhere ahead of them. As he could come to no satisfactory conclusion regarding them, Singing Bear dis-

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missed them from his thoughts and busied his brain with plans for continuing his journey. He knew that if the warriors whom he had seen were aware of his presence along the river, his task would be doubly difficult. He believed that his only chance was to drift past them under cover of the night.

The day wore slowly to an end, and the impatient young Chippewa watched eagerly while the sun sank gradually from his sight behind the pines. Then he drew his robe about him and waited for the twilight to give way to dark. As the first stars appeared he rose and turned his face to the heavens. For some moments he prayed earnestly to the Great Spirit, asking for strength against his foes. Then he carried his canoe to the river.

Singing Bear paddled swiftly through the night, with every sense keenly alert to detect the first warning of danger. His eyes searched anxiously along the great, black wall of forest which marked the shore; his ears caught the faintest whispers of the night, and his sensitive nostrils examined the air for a trace of smoke. Once he heard the distant hooting of an owl, far away in the woods, and he stopped to listen. After some moments the dreary sound again echoed through the night, but only the wind gave answer. Then the hungry

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scream of a hunting lynx rose close at hand, and Singing Bear even heard the soft fall of the padded feet on the dry leaves of the forest. Thus the daring lad moved through the dark, listening and watching like some frightened beast of the wilderness.

Suddenly, far ahead of him, he detected the flicker of a camp-fire twinkling brightly between the trees. He felt sure that he had overtaken the warriors who had passed him earlier in the day. Determined to reconnoiter their camp, the reckless young Chippewa moved cautiously forward under the protection of the heavy shadows from the shore. The unconcealed fire convinced him that his foes either supposed him still far ahead of them, or else were entirely unaware of his presence in their domains. Encouraged by the latter possibility, Singing Bear determined to pass his enemies under cover of the night.

At that very moment, however, the Mohawks added fresh fuel to the fire, and a wide lane of glaring light reached out across the water and formed an impassable barrier in the path of the Chippewa. He saw at once that it would be impossible to cross that bar of light without being discovered from the shore. There was but one thing to do, therefore, and that was to wait, in hope that the fire

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would again die down and give him a chance to dash past in the dark. Still, every moment was precious, and delay might be fatal. He realized that at daylight the Mohawks would again embark upon the river, and he was anxious to put as much distance as possible behind him before dawn forced him into hiding.

The hours passed and still Singing Bear lingered in the shadows. Meanwhile the golden streak which barred the river lost none of its brilliance. Roused almost to desperation, the young Chippewa was tempted to make a bold dash across the barrier, and then trust to the strength of his sinewy arms in a wild race down the river. He soon saw the folly of that reckless plan, however, and dismissed it as the idea of a foolish papoose.

Then his alert senses warned him of the approach of an unseen enemy, who was advancing stealthily under protection of the dark. Listening with his head close to the water, he heard the soft swish of a paddle, and he believed that the hidden foe who had attacked him earlier in the day was paddling cautiously down the river in search of him. His heart bounded at the thought. He pushed his canoe closer to the shore and waited for the unknown prowler to pass. Singing Bear

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knew that this mysterious voyager must already have discovered the fire. The excited lad again lowered his head to the water to listen. The paddler was abreast of him. Then the sound suddenly ceased and Singing Bear seized his tomahawk. Long, anxious moments passed, and still no sound came from the darkness. Singing Bear believed that his foe had discovered him. He crouched in his canoe, weapon in hand, ready to fight for his life.

Suddenly the low, querulous call of a loon sounded within bow-shot of him. A moment afterward it was answered by the bark of a fox in the direction of the fire. Then he again heard the soft splash of a paddle and he knew that the new-comer had exchanged signals with his friends. Soon afterward he heard a low hail from the shore and a reply from the river. Then all was still.

Singing Bear felt sure that the new arrival would warn his tribesmen of the trespasser who had passed down the river ahead of them. The lad realized that his predicament was a serious one, and he was undecided just what to do. To proceed meant certain exposure to capture and death. For a moment he faltered. Then the unconquerable blood of his people asserted itself. He determined

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to go on at any cost—he would accomplish what he had set out to do or die in the attempt.

Then the delighted lad saw that the path of light was gradually fading from the water, and his heart filled with hope. He counted the moments until the last flickering gleam melted into the darkness, and then he moved boldly out into the river. Once in the channel, he paddled forward with all his strength. Glancing anxiously over his shoulder, he saw the camp-fire and three black figures sitting in the glow. A moment later he had passed his enemies without being discovered. Then, directly ahead of him, he heard the sullen roar of the rapids, and he braced himself to meet the peril.

Before Singing Bear realized what had happened, however, a great wave caught the canoe amidships and half filled it. Rolling and entirely unmanageable, the doomed craft careened against a great slime-covered boulder and cracked to pieces like an egg-shell. Grasping wildly to save his weapons, the young Chippewa sank beneath the water and was swept away by the roaring torrent.

The half-choked lad finally rose to the surface and found himself in a wild sea of great, white-crested billows that tossed him about at will. Although Singing Bear was a strong

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and skilful swimmer, his best efforts seemed futile. Choking, gasping, and struggling, he was spun about and rolled along in the mighty grasp of the rapids. Twice he narrowly escaped having his brains dashed out against great submerged boulders. Strive as he might, he seemed powerless to save himself. Cut, bruised, and battered, he was being swept to his doom. Then when he had ceased to fight, the river threw him contemptuously aside and left him to die.

When Singing Bear finally regained consciousness he found himself lying face downward on a narrow point of land which projected some distance into the river. Behind him he heard the ominous roar of the rapids, and his reeling brain steadied at the sound. He recalled his wild battle through that inferno of raging water, and in a bewildered sort of way he became aware of his predicament. Daylight had already dawned, and, aware that he might be discovered at any moment, the exhausted lad raised himself feebly and looked about him for some place of concealment. The effort caused him much pain, and he feared he had been badly injured. Under him lay his bow, and on his back he felt the soaked buckskin quiver filled with arrows. The possession of his weapons

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comforted him, and he began to crawl painfully toward a thicket of low bushes at the edge of the woods. Although the distance was short, it was a slow, torturing journey, and when he finally parted the branches and crawled from sight he sank down exhausted.

Singing Bear had scarcely reached cover when a bark canoe entered the rapids and came careening and plunging down the long lane of tossing billows. The frail craft was guided by two Mohawk warriors, one in each end. The warrior in the stern of the canoe stood erect and steered with a long pole, while his companion crouched in the bow with his paddle poised to ward off the great, jagged boulders that reared their heads above the torrent. It was a wild, dangerous ride, and the paddlers turned and laughed back at the peril when they found themselves safely afloat in the quiet water beyond. Then they resumed their journey and passed rapidly out of sight down the river.

Having gained the protection of the bushes, Singing Bear lay weak and helpless. He had lost his robe, and he was chilled and sore and miserable. He made several attempts to rise, but each time he fell back with a groan, his agony showing in his eyes. Then he began to lose courage. He told himself it was the end

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—he had failed. Far from his own people, stranded and helpless in a hostile country, he acknowledged himself easy prey for the fierce and warlike Mohawks. Unable to help himself, he turned his face to the sky and asked aid from the Great Spirit.

Then Singing Bear suddenly remembered that only one canoe had passed through the rapids. What had become of the lone paddler? The lad's eyes glowed with hate at the thought of him. He wondered why that skulking foe had not accompanied his comrades down the river. He felt certain that they had discovered the broken canoe, and, if they had, he hoped they would believe that its owner had gone to his death in the rapids. He wondered whether they had communicated the fact to their tribesman. Then a new possibility suggested itself to his mind. Perhaps the canoe had filled and sunk. In that case the Mohawk would continue to look for him.

Soon afterward Singing Bear's perplexity was banished by the appearance of the second canoe, which he saw racing through the rapids. The alert, solitary paddler guided his plunging craft with the judgment and skill of a veteran, and brought it safely into quiet water. The young Chippewa watched him anxiously. The

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paddler, who was resting from his exertions, had come close to the shore, and Singing Bear was able to study him at short range. He saw that the Mohawk was a man in the very prime of life, tall and sinewy, with a stern, fearless face, a deep chest, and wide, sloping shoulders. His sharp, black eyes noted every detail of the shore as he drifted slowly along within easy bow-shot of the bushes. Once he looked directly at the thicket which sheltered the helpless Chippewa, and Singing Bear's nerveless fingers closed weakly about his bow. Then the Mohawk plunged his paddle into the water and moved swiftly down the river after his comrades.

Singing Bear was now convinced that the Mohawks were entirely ignorant of the fate which had overtaken him. It was evident that they supposed him still some distance in advance of them. The thought gave the young Chippewa hope, for he realized that as long as he remained in his hiding-place he would be safe. He began to look about him, therefore, with the idea of making himself more comfortable. The first thing he required was warmth, for he was shivering in the frosty air which rose from the water. As he had no way of making a fire, he crawled upon a large, flat rock and basked in the sun. He found

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some berries close by and ate them, and felt refreshed. Then as the sun gradually rose higher above the trees and warmed him with its heat, his pain became less severe and he began to examine himself. He was battered and bruised, but he could find no evidence of a permanent injury. Encouraged by the discovery, he gradually regained his strength, and at the end of the long day he was able to rise and limp slowly about.

Twilight was fast giving way to dark when Singing Bear saw the leafy top of a great tree which was drifting down through the rapids. As he watched it bumping its way through the billows, an idea suddenly flashed into his mind. It was a bold and reckless thought, and for a moment the lad hesitated. Then he determined to risk his life on the success of the daring stratagem.

When the tree drifted into the calmer water below the rapids Singing Bear waded out from the shore and swam toilsomely to the treetop. Then with considerable effort he dragged himself upon the log, crawled forward into the tangle of branches, and was carried slowly down the river.

As night closed down the young Chippewa peered anxiously from his leafy shelter, in the hope of discovering the Mohawk camp-fire.

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Then he came upon another stretch of wild water, and his heart filled with dismay. He passed through the rapids in safety, however, and found himself on a long, level stretch of the river, which flowed peacefully between the walls of a great, high forest on either side.

Then Singing Bear again heard the call of the loon, and the answering bark of a fox. The sounds filled him with alarm, for he knew that he had overtaken the Mohawks. He believed that they had separated, and were camped on opposite sides of the river. He looked in vain for the warning glow of their fires. The signals were repeated, and he felt sure that the sharp-eyed Mohawk scouts had discovered the drifting tree trunk, and, having failed to identify it, were warning one another of its approach through the dark.

The young Chippewa felt quite sure that one, or possibly both, canoes would steal quietly from shore to investigate. Before it was too late, therefore, the wily lad slipped noiselessly into the water and, turning upon his back, floated rapidly away from his shelter.

Singing Bear had not gone an arrow-flight when he heard the sound of paddles, and, aware that his foes were close at hand, he sank in the water until only the upper part of his face was above the surface. Floating thus, he saw

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a long, black shape glide past, within bow-length of him, and he knew that it was one of the Mohawk canoes. When it had passed from hearing he turned upon his stomach and swam toward the shore. Each stroke was agony, for his muscles were strained and his body was cut and bruised from his battle with the rapids. However, he realized that his life depended upon his efforts, and the thought gave him strength. Finally his feet struck solid ground, and he staggered up the bank and sought shelter in the forest.

Once in the woods, Singing Bear concealed himself to watch for the return of the Mohawks. It was not long before he heard the scraping of a canoe on the gravelly beach. All his weakness seemed to vanish at the sound and the hot fighting blood surged to his brain. Fitting an arrow to his bow, he began a stealthy advance in the direction of the sound.

Suddenly Singing Bear sank noiselessly to the ground and lay as motionless as the rock behind which he had taken shelter. A short distance in front of him, with its bow drawn up on the shore, was the Mohawk canoe. Somewhere within bow-shot of it were the Mohawks themselves, for Singing Bear heard the sound of their voices. Cautiously, an inch

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at a time, he raised himself to peer over his hiding-place. There, within leaping distance, floated the Mohawk canoe, but the night hid its owners from his sight.

To reach the prize it would be necessary to cross the open beach, and to do that within hailing distance of such alert foes as the Mohawks was a perilous and difficult undertaking. However, Singing Bear determined to make the attempt. The sound of the voices had ceased, and he began to wonder if by any chance his enemies had discovered him. He became suspicious. Perhaps the crafty Mohawks were waiting for him to approach the bait, when they would rise and pierce him with their arrows. For a moment his weakness and pain returned and he thought of abandoning the exploit and retreating into the forest. While he hesitated the cry of the loon sounded from the water, and Singing Bear knew that the other canoe was crossing the river. Then the low, guarded bark of the fox sounded from beside the canoe on the beach, and the Chippewa smiled grimly as he realized how narrowly he had escaped from the trap.

The second canoe came to shore almost opposite his hiding-place, and the solitary warrior passed so near that he could have touched

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him with his bow. Singing Bear waited until he heard the Mohawks talking, and then he began to wriggle toward the river. When he had gone a bow-length he stopped to listen, and as he still heard the voices of his foes he continued across the beach. At last his moccasin touched the water and, turning his head, he saw a dark, indistinct object within a short distance of him. He crawled quickly forward and found the Mohawk canoe. Pausing a moment to listen, he pushed the canoe from shore and turned it down the river.

It was soon evident that the Mohawks still believed that their foe was ahead of them, for they left the canoes at the edge of the shore, ready for immediate use, and made their way to the forest. A few moments later Singing Bear heard them breaking sticks for a fire.

This unexpected manoeuver gave the young Chippewa the very chance he longed for, and he rose and approached the other Mohawk canoe as silently as a shadow. He had grasped it at the bow and was in the very act of pushing it from shore when a wild yell rose through the night and several arrows whizzed past him in the darkness.

Singing Bear realized that he had been discovered. There was not a moment to lose. He shoved the canoe into the water and

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clambered in over the bow. Seizing one of the two paddles which he found in the bottom of the captured craft, he paddled swiftly down the river. He kept well out toward the center of the stream, for he felt sure that the enraged Mohawks would follow along the shore in the hope of reaching him with their arrows.

After that first surprised yell, not a sound came from the silent, black forest, and the lad was baffled in his effort to learn the whereabouts of his foes. He soon found the canoe which he had set adrift, and quickly towed it to the opposite side of the river. It was only the work of an instant to drive a rock through the bottom of the frail craft and drag it into the bushes. Then, satisfied that he had left his foes without the means of pursuit, Singing Bear resumed his flight down the river.

Some time afterward the Chippewa heard signals echoing through the forest far behind him. The loon called and an owl hooted many times. However, Singing Bear assured himself that he had nothing to fear so long as the calls continued behind him. His only immediate concern, therefore, was as to what perils lay in front of him. He realized that if the Mohawk village should lie directly ahead of him, or if some wandering war-party had

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heard the signals of their comrades, then his chance of escape was slight.

The signals soon ceased, however, and as no reply had come from down the river Singing Bear felt considerably encouraged. He paddled steadily through the balance of the night, and even when the first gray warning of daylight spread slowly across the sky he continued boldly on his way. In doubt as to the exact location of the Mohawk village, which he had heard was somewhere along the river, he kept a sharp watch ahead of him for the first warning of danger. His one desire was to put as much distance as possible between himself and his pursuers before he was finally forced into hiding.

Singing Bear had quite recovered from his rough handling in the rapids and, although his body was still bruised and sore, he felt sufficiently strong to cope with any emergency which might arise. The success of his daring plan had restored his confidence and he determined to push on resolutely to the end of his journey.

When the sun finally appeared above the treetops, Singing Bear paddled along in the heavy shadows from the wooded shore. There he was able to glide noiselessly beneath the overhanging branches of the trees with less

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likelihood of discovery. As the hours passed and he failed to discover the Mohawk village, he became somewhat perplexed. However, as he saw nothing ahead to cause him concern, he decided to continue his journey. He began to hope that he might have passed the main Mohawk camp under cover of the night.

Then he was brought quickly to a realization of his peril by the sight of two Mohawk canoes lying bottom up on a narrow, sandy beach directly ahead of him. Thoroughly alarmed by the discovery, he hurried to conceal himself beneath the great, drooping branches of a spruce that grew close to the edge of the water. Then for some moments he studied the canoes on the beach. As he saw no sign of life about them, and as they had been drawn far up from the water, he finally concluded that their owners had gone a journey into the forest. Therefore, the reckless lad determined, to leave his hiding-place and paddle swiftly past the dangerous spot while his foes were away.

Singing Bear had barely come abreast of the canoes, however, when four Mohawk warriors rose, yelling savagely, and discharged their arrows at him. One of the flint-tipped shafts opened a gash in his shoulder, and another pierced the side of his canoe. Throwing

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himself prone, the astounded Chippewa discharged several arrows at his enemies, who promptly disappeared behind their canoes.

The surprise had been complete, and Singing Bear's heart filled with rage as he realized how stupidly he had blundered into the clever trap that had been set for him. Having seen him approaching, the wily Mohawks had gone ashore and concealed themselves behind their canoes, feeling quite sure that the young Chippewa would attempt to pass within bow-shot.

Now that they had him almost in their grasp, however, they dared not expose themselves to go forth and capture him. Every time they showed themselves Singing Bear drove them to cover with a well-directed arrow. Thus the skirmish continued while the courageous lad drifted slowly but steadily down the river.

Then Singing Bear suddenly rose to his knees, plunged his paddle deep into the water, and disappeared around a bend of the stream before the surprised Mohawks knew what had happened. He put every ounce of his strength into his arms, and the canoe rushed through the water like a frightened deer. Wild shouts from the shore told him that his pursuit had already begun.

By the time the Mohawks had launched

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their canoes and rounded the first bend of the river, Singing Bear had already disappeared around another abrupt turn of the stream. Then a short distance ahead of him he saw the tossing white-caps of another long rapids.

Then an idea suddenly suggested itself, and he turned aside into a shallow pool near the shore. Jumping from the canoe, he pushed it into the current and scrambled hastily up the bank. As he gained the woods he saw the abandoned canoe capsize in the rapids and lodge firmly between two great boulders in the very center of the torrent. Satisfied with the success of his stratagem, Singing Bear retreated into the depths of the forest.

As the Mohawks were about to enter the rapids they saw the stranded canoe. Greatly excited over the discovery, they landed two of their comrades, one on each shore of the river. These warriors hurried along the rocky banks of the stream, searching for the body of the Chippewa, whom they believed had been drowned in the rapids. When they failed to find him they declared that the good water spirits who guarded the Mohawks had eaten him.

Unknowingly, Singing Bear had already passed the great Mohawk village the previous night, so that now he had little to fear. For

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several days he traveled steadily south toward the wonderful lake of the beavers. At last he found it and camped there many moons. When he had all the beaver-pelts he could carry he made himself a new canoe and set out for his own people, whom he finally reached in safety late the following spring.

VI

THE WAR-EAGLE

FOR several days the war-eagle had circled above the great Sioux camp. The warriors watched it anxiously, and the old men shook their heads and said: "That great bird is calling us to war. We must go."

At length the tribe assembled in council, and the chiefs and fighting-men argued for war. They declared that the great bird of their people had called them to take the war-path, and that, therefore, their efforts would surely be crowned with success. Some advised a raid upon the Blackfeet; others proposed an attack upon their old-time enemies, the hated Pawnees. War-songs were chanted and tales of battle told until all the people became greatly excited and cried out for war.

Then Crazy Wolf, the medicine-man, rose, and at once the tumult subsided, as the Sioux accorded him the attention and respect to which his position entitled him. He told them that he was glad they cried for war, as it

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proved that they were men. He said they should always be prepared to fight their enemies. However, he warned them that in the present instance it was bad, for he had seen a vision, and he cautioned his people to remain within the village, lest they should meet with disaster. Crazy Wolf reminded them that the great war-bird had always remained over them, and that, he declared, was a sign that they must abandon the war-trail and remain in their lodges.

The warriors and head chiefs of the tribe received the advice in sullen silence, and for a long time no one replied. They were sorely disappointed, for the medicine of Crazy Wolf had always been good, and they did not care to disobey him.

At last the great Sioux war-chief, Black Buffalo, rose and addressed his people with great solemnity. He said he was glad to know that their hearts were brave, and declared that the war-songs were sweet to his ears. He assured them that he, too, was for war, but that they must first heed the advice of Crazy Wolf, their medicine-man. Black Buffalo proposed, therefore, that they should wait until the following day, when Crazy Wolf would make strong medicine and talk with the great war-bird, to learn if his vision were true.

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The camp was astir at dawn the following day, and in all parts of the village warriors were calling out their plans of battle and asking for volunteers to follow them. Some had even painted and decorated themselves for the war-trail, and the boys were already bringing in the swift-footed war-ponies.

At some little distance from the village stood Crazy Wolf, the medicine-man. His heart was sad and troubled, for he had dreamed another vision, and it was bad. Gloomy and depressed, his anxious eyes scanned the great expanse of sky for a sign of the great war-bird. Although he kept his lonely vigil within easy bow-shot of the camp, he was not disturbed, for the people knew that he was making medicine and praying to the Great Mystery, and at such times no one dared to intrude.

Then a great shout rose from the village, as the war-bird was seen high up in the sky. It flew directly toward the Sioux camp, and as it drew near and hovered over the lodges a superstitious awe seized the people and kept them silent. They turned their faces to the heavens and watched the eagle with much anxiety.

In the mean time Crazy Wolf had unwrapped the medicine-pipe, and, having filled

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it, he smoked first to the four winds, and then held the pipe toward the great bird above him. The Sioux looked on in respectful silence as he went through his mysterious ceremonies. When he finally concluded his appeals and walked solemnly into the village, they formed the council-circle and waited impatiently to know his verdict.

Crazy Wolf made another impressive address, in which he once more cautioned his people against taking the war-trail. He pointed dramatically to the war-eagle, which was sailing in great, wide circles above them, and warned them that all who stepped beyond the boundaries of its flight must surely meet with misfortune. He said that the great bird was throwing enchanted circles about the village, to protect the people from some impending peril. Then with a final warning against overstepping this imaginary boundary, Crazy Wolf left the council and sought the seclusion of his lodge.

Then several noted warriors rose and made speeches. These men claimed that they, too, had dreamed visions, and that always it was a call to war. They declared that the war-bird was waiting to guide them on the trail, and that as soon as they should start it would leave the village and accompany them. They

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argued that never before were the Blackfeet and Pawnees possessed of so many speedy ponies, and they declared that a raid against either of those successful rivals would bring them great wealth. They urged the assembled warriors to be men, and promised to lead them forth to easy victory.

A little apart, a company of more excitable young braves were performing a war-dance, and the sound of their war-drums threw the assemblage into a frenzy. Shouting and shaking their weapons, the warriors left the council and joined in the dance. The old men chuckled gleefully and strutted about the dancers, reciting boastful tales of their own prowess in the days gone by. Even the women and children yielded to the excitement, and the great camp became one vast pandemonium of noise.

Crazy Wolf heard it, and his heart filled with gloomy forebodings. He again unwrapped the sacred pipe and, secure in the solitude of his lodge, made many smoke offerings to the good spirits, that his medicine might be made strong, so that his people would accept it and heed his counsel.

Having finally roused themselves into an ecstasy of enthusiasm, the warriors formed into two great war-parties. They left the

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village, shouting the Sioux battle-cry and singing their war-songs. One company of fighting-men turned toward the country of the Blackfeet, the other disappeared toward the south in the direction of the distant Pawnee camp. This second company, under the leadership of Black Buffalo himself, was the stronger, for all the Sioux were eager to fight the Pawnees.

As the great host of warriors left the village the war-eagle hovered directly above the camp, and then, as they disappeared, the great bird uttered a piercing scream and sailed away in a different direction from that taken by the war-parties. The old men shook their heads solemnly at this sign, and Crazy Wolf stood at the door of his lodge and looked long and anxiously after the retreating bird.

The warriors having departed, the village contained only the old men, the women and children, and the lads too young to venture upon the war-trail. They all sang war-songs and performed the customary ceremonies to bring success to the war-parties.

Late that day, as the long shadows were falling, some boys ran into camp and said that they had seen three prairie-wolves far away on the rim of the plain. They declared that these animals did not act like the wolves

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usually do, but sat erect, some distance apart, and gazed long and steadily toward the Sioux lodges. When the boys mounted their ponies and galloped toward them the wolves disappeared, and, although the young Sioux watched a long time, they saw nothing further of them.

The medicine-man seemed much disturbed by the tale, and the women became greatly frightened. Black Bird, an old warrior, declared that the objects which the boys had seen were not wolves at all, but Pawnee scouts with the pelts of wolves thrown over them. He said that he had seen the Pawnees do this many times, and he declared that they would surely attack the Sioux camp and annihilate the feeble garrison.

Alarmed by the possibility, Crazy Wolf at once called the old men in council, to devise some plan of defense. Several of the aged warriors made speeches in which they boasted of their bravery and proclaimed their intention of fighting these despised enemies. At first it was decided to make a big fire of green wood and raise smoke signals to recall the war-parties. Upon reflection, however, Crazy Wolf declared against the plan. He said that no doubt the Pawnees were already within striking distance and were only waiting to learn the exact strength and condition of the Sioux

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forces. Once they saw a signal for help rising from the village, the medicine-man believed they would be sure to guess the truth, and then they would press their attack and win their victory, before the war-parties could return. The old men speedily saw the wisdom of his words and the idea was abandoned.

Then Crazy Wolf said that they must send away two riders, under cover of the night, one after each war-party. In the mean time, he ordered the old men to put on their war-bonnets and walk about at the edge of the camp, to give the impression that the village was filled with fighting-men. The older boys, too, dressed as warriors and displayed themselves, in the hope that the Pawnee scouts would see them and believe that the camp was well protected.

The day came to a close, and at twilight two lads went out and drove in a bunch of ponies, which were picketed near the camp. The old men asked if they had seen anything more of the strange wolves, and the boys replied that they had seen nothing of them. Crazy Wolf was somewhat relieved at this, and hoped that, after all, the three spies might have been alone.

However, it was decided to send the two riders after the war-parties, and when it was dark Two Feathers, the young son of Black

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Buffalo, and White Antelope, the grandson of old Black Bird, were chosen for the dangerous task. They were given the two fastest ponies, and, after Crazy Wolf had invoked the aid of the good spirits in their behalf, the lads stole from the camp and rode away upon their mission. The little band of Sioux in the village listened anxiously, but as the time passed and the silence continued the old men smiled and shook their heads in approval of the caution displayed by the young messengers.

The lads had gone scarcely an arrow-flight from camp, however, when two lithe forms rose from the plain and followed after each of the ponies.

Then a brief, piercing yell rang through the night; and the people in the village heard and understood. It was the voice of White Antelope, and old Black Bird seized his weapons and started bravely to the rescue of his grandson. Crazy Wolf ran after him and dragged him back into the camp. Then they listened for further sounds, but all was still.

Both boys had gone about equal distances from camp when they were surrounded and pulled from their ponies. White Antelope had succeeded in emitting a piercing scream to warn his people, and then a hand was clapped across his mouth. Each young Sioux was

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quickly bound and gagged and thrown across the back of his pony, which was led away by a small company of Pawnee scouts.

Believing that the village was about to be attacked, Crazy Wolf armed every occupant, so that even the women and children took their places in line of battle with the old men and boys, who were chanting war-songs and boasting how they would kill the Pawnees. They waited a long time in nervous suspense, each moment expecting to hear the yells of their foes at the edge of the camp. However, as they heard nothing to rouse their suspicions, they began to hope that, for some reason, the Pawnees had postponed their attack.

Two Feathers and White Antelope were greatly surprised when, after a long, hard ride across the plains, they were thrown to the ground, side by side, in the center of a large circle of Pawnee warriors. Having separated soon after leaving the Sioux village, neither had been aware that the other had been captured, so that both were equally astonished. The buckskin gags which had been thrust into their mouths prevented them from conversing, and they lay upon the plain, glaring defiantly into the fierce, painted faces of their captors, who were crowding eagerly forward to have a look at them.

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After considerable discussion among the warriors the gags were finally taken from the boys' mouths, and a warrior addressed them in their own tongue and warned them that the first outcry would end in their death. The young Sioux realized that the warning was useless, for they had nothing to gain by making the attempt. They had little doubt that they were far out of hearing of their own war-parties, and people in the village would not dare attempt to rescue them, even if they should hear their cries. Therefore they had every intention of remaining silent.

It was soon evident to the lads that the Pawnee scouts had arrived after the two war-parties had left the Sioux village. Not knowing the strength of their foes, therefore, the Pawnees were delaying their attack until they secured the information they desired. Now that they had captured the two young Sioux, they hoped to intimidate them into telling them what they wished to know. The warrior who had spoken to the lads in the Sioux dialect began to question them. However, as the keen-witted lads purposely misconstrued many of his queries, the exasperated Pawnee learned nothing but what they wished him to know. To his oft-repeated question of how many fighting-men were sheltered in the camp,

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the lads pointed solemnly to the stars and then to the grass of the prairie, to give the idea of numbers. At that boast the Pawnees accused them of speaking with a double tongue, and began to threaten them, but the youthful captives only shrugged their shoulders and pretended not to understand. Then they were tied upon their ponies and sent to the distant Pawnee camp under a guard of four warriors.

In the mean time the people in the Sioux village had about abandoned hope. Old Black Bird went about like one in a dream, mourning for his grandson. The old warriors held a council and said: "See, the medicine of Crazy Wolf was good, and we should have listened. We have closed our ears to the warning of the great war-bird. It is bad. We will never see our people again." Crazy Wolf made many smoke offerings, and conducted all sorts of mysterious ceremonies to insure the safety of the camp and the speedy return of the war-parties. When the long night finally passed and daylight came to strengthen their courage, he summoned all the people, and smoked many pipes to the Great Mystery that he might pity them and send their warriors to help them.

Still the Pawnees delayed their attack.

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Many scouts had been sent to spy upon the Sioux, but they had returned and reported that they had seen many warriors walking about among the lodges. Thus the trick of Crazy Wolf had so far been successful.

During all this time the two Sioux war-parties were riding steadily on their way. The company which had gone north against the Blackfeet passed the first night in the bottom of a wooded ravine. Feeling sure of victory, the warriors danced and sang until almost daylight. Before the sun was up, they were again on the march. They had not gone far, however, when one of the chiefs stopped his pony and pointed to the sky. Looking up, the Sioux beheld the war-eagle circling over them. They were overjoyed, for they felt sure that it was a good omen.

As they traveled on, however, they saw that, instead of following them, the great war-bird remained behind, circling slowly over the spot where they had camped. Then some of the warriors recalled the warning of Crazy Wolf, the medicine-man. Several began to have fears, and urged a speedy return to the village. Their companions laughed scornfully at them and accused them of having weak hearts and the courage of papooses.

While the members of the war-party were

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arguing, however, the eagle uttered a loud cry and sailed away in the direction of the Sioux village. Then the bravest among them lost heart, and the war-leader ordered a halt, that they might hold a council. Many speeches were made, and all the speakers declared that their medicine was bad, and that, therefore, they should heed the words of Crazy Wolf and return to their lodges. The plan was speedily decided upon, and the company of brave Sioux fighting-men reluctantly turned their ponies and started back toward the village.

In the mean time, the four Pawnee warriors had reached the Pawnee camp with their youthful prisoners. A few warriors and some old men came forward to meet them, and when they recognized the captives as Sioux they began to shout and dance with joy. Two Feathers and White Antelope were dragged from their ponies and hustled to the center of the camp. The Pawnees seemed greatly astonished at their youthfulness, and some of the old squaws shook their heads with pity. The Sioux looked bravely about them, and at a sign from one of their guards they seated themselves on a great log before the fire.

Far away to the north the Sioux war-party which had turned back from the expedition against the Blackfeet was galloping wildly

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across the plain. When they saw that the war-eagle continually flew in sight of them and led them toward the Sioux village, they were convinced that a calamity of some sort threatened the distant camp. Wild with anxiety, they urged their ponies at top speed in an endeavor to reach the village before the disaster occurred. The day was far gone when they finally came in sight of the lodges. Then they saw a great company of horsemen far out on the plain. Quickly drawing into concealment behind a high butte, the alarmed Sioux sent scouts forward to reconnoiter.

The Pawnees were gathered in council. Having failed to gather any important information from the youthful captives whom they had sent to the Pawnee village, they determined to swoop upon the Sioux camp under cover of darkness. They were chanting their war-songs and brandishing their weapons, in an effort to intimidate any of their foes who might be watching them.

Within the Sioux village, Crazy Wolf was addressing the little group of feeble defenders, and urging them to be brave. He knew that with the falling of darkness the dreaded attack would take place, and he had little doubt that all of them would be speedily annihilated, men, women, and children together. He knew

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only too well the hatred and ferocity of the war-like Pawnees, and he was sure that no one could hope for mercy when once those fierce warriors had entered the great circle of lodges. Most of the women were already filled with panic, and the little children were crying piteously. The courageous old warriors, however, and many of the boys were ready and eager to fight. They were singing and dancing and calling upon the Great Mystery to lead them to victory.

In the far-off Pawnee camp, Two Feathers and White Antelope had been securely bound and thrown into a great buffalo-skin lodge. There they were to be confined until the vast war-party of Pawnee warriors returned from their expedition against the Sioux. Then their fate would be speedily decided upon and they would be led forth to meet it.

Just inside the entrance of the lodge in which they were imprisoned sat the solitary Pawnee warrior who guarded them. He spoke a few words of the Sioux dialect, and the lads believed that at some time he might have been a prisoner in the Sioux camp. He questioned them about their tribe, and when they pretended to misunderstand him he began to slap and pinch them. The boys accepted the punishment without flinching,

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however, and he finally took compassion upon them and let them have peace.

Although the lads managed to say a few words to each other from time to time, they made no plans for escape. They believed that for the present, at least, it was impossible. Their lone guard never took his eyes from them, and the slightest move to free themselves would have been instantly detected. Therefore the captives dismissed the idea from their minds and turned their thoughts to their people. They wondered whether the Pawnees had already captured the Sioux camp and destroyed its feeble defenders. Then they thought about the Sioux war-parties, and wondered what had become of the one which had set out for the very camp they were in. They refused to believe that Black Buffalo, the great Sioux war-chief, would turn back. Then they thought of their own plight, and began to speculate upon their chance of escape if Black Buffalo and his warriors should surround and attack the village. They feared in that event their stalwart guard would drive his knife into their hearts to prevent them from falling into the hands of their own people. Thus they lay and thought, and the long day drew toward an end.

At sunset a Sioux scout left the edge of the

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camp and crawled cautiously into the sage. Making his way, snakewise, over the ground till he reached the spot where his pony was concealed, he mounted and raced away to join Black Buffalo and his band of warriors, who were hidden in a dry stream-bed far out on the plain.

The few warriors who had been left to guard the camp gathered at the edge of the village to admire the brilliant beauty of the western sky. As they feasted their eyes upon the glorious spectacle, they saw a great eagle suddenly swoop from the clouds and fly directly toward the Pawnee village. Then the thunder of many hoofs echoed across the plain, and, turning in alarm, the astounded Pawnees saw a great company of Sioux bearing down upon them. Straight for the camp rode Black Buffalo, who had learned from his scouts that his son was a prisoner, and after him raced the gallant company of Sioux warriors.

Hearing the commotion, the Pawnee who guarded the boys ran outside to learn what was happening. When he saw the Sioux sweeping upon the camp he jumped into the lodge, knife in hand, to end the lives of the helpless captives. As he entered, however, he was set upon and quickly overpowered by three Sioux warriors, who had entered the

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lodge by slashing an opening in the rear wall when the guard rushed outside. Fearful for the lives of his young tribesmen when once the Pawnees heard the war-cry of his warriors, Black Buffalo had sent picked scouts to conceal themselves at the border of the camp. These warriors had been ordered to wait until the Sioux made their charge, when they were to rush into the camp and rescue the prisoners.

The Sioux raid was completely successful, and Black Buffalo soon found himself in possession of the Pawnee camp. He did not tarry long, for Two Feathers told him of the desperate plight of the Sioux village. Calling to his warriors to follow him, he rode from the village and raced wildly across the plain to the rescue of his people. Beside him rode White Antelope and Two Feathers, who were determined to revenge themselves upon the foes who had caused them so much discomfort.

The other Sioux war-party had already reached the village. Having remained in hiding until they saw the Pawnees making preparations to attack the camp at the end of the day, the Sioux dashed from their hiding-place and raced their ponies toward the village. Before the astonished Pawnees recovered from their surprise the company of horsemen had gained the shelter of the lodges.

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Believing that those warriors were reinforcements which had been summoned in some mysterious manner by the Sioux in the village, the Pawnees held another council and decided to postpone the attack until night.

Crazy Wolf and his little garrison were overjoyed at the arrival of the war-party. Encouraged by this substantial addition to their numbers, some of the old warriors ran outside of the village to shout insults and challenges at the Pawnees. Kicking Horse, a famous fighting-chief, took command of the camp and sent out scouts to warn him of the approach of the enemy.

As the night wore on Black Buffalo and his gallant band raced wildly through the dark on their way to the Sioux village. Guided by the stars, they rode along in grim silence, each rider filled with a stern resolve to avenge himself upon his hated foes.

Shortly before daylight the Sioux scouts, who had been sent out from the village, brought word that the Pawnees had dismounted and were approaching the camp on foot. As soon as he heard this, Kicking Horse posted his warriors to defend the village. Then, having taken their positions, they waited calmly for their enemies to attack them. Not a sound disturbed the quiet of

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the night, and the Sioux wondered whether their foes had again delayed the assault.

Then a fierce Pawnee yell vibrated through the night and a long line of painted warriors ran toward the camp. A moment later the village resounded with the sounds of combat. The shouts and whoops of the warriors, the sharp twang of bowstrings, the ominous hum of arrows, and the distracted cries and shrieks of the women and children united in one great, discordant din that rolled far out over the slumbering plain.

The fighting was fast and furious, and, although they were greatly outnumbered, the Sioux held their ground with great stubbornness. Three times the Pawnees charged right up to the very lodges, and each time they were driven back by the courageous Sioux.

Then the besiegers withdrew, carrying their dead and wounded with them. The Sioux' loss had been comparatively slight, owing to the protection which they had received from the lodges. They knew that they had inflicted punishment upon their enemies, and they were highly elated at their success. They believed that the Pawnees would retire until daylight, and, after posting scouts to give warning of another attack, the main company of warriors devoted themselves to celebrating the victory.

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When the first streak of daylight stretched across the sky the Pawnees mounted their ponies and galloped wildly toward the village. They raced madly about the camp, shaking their weapons and yelling like demons. Then they suddenly wheeled and made their charge; but the alert Sioux were ready for them and drove them off with considerable loss.

While the besiegers were manœuvering for a new attack, a long line of black objects appeared far away to the south. The Pawnees saw it and crowded together in anxious council. The Sioux saw it, too, and raised a mighty shout of defiance, for they knew it was Black Buffalo and his great war-party of picked fighting men.

The Pawnees, alarmed and undecided at sight of this great company of Sioux, wavered on the verge of panic. Black Buffalo and his warriors had strung out in a long line across the plain to block the retreat of their foes. Then, as the disheartened Pawnees turned from the village, Kicking Horse and his warriors mounted their ponies and dashed from the camp to attack them from the rear.

Roused to desperation, the Pawnees fought like demons to escape from the trap in which they found themselves. However, the Sioux

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gradually closed in upon them from front and rear. Then began a terrific hand-to-hand engagement which continued until the Pawnees finally fought their way through the Sioux lines and scattered over the prairie in wild disorder. The Sioux gave chase, but as they had already inflicted a terrible punishment, and as the Pawnee ponies were fresher than their own, they soon abandoned the pursuit and returned to the village.

When the people were gathered together to mourn for those who had been killed in the fight, Crazy Wolf rose solemnly and pointed to the sky. The Sioux looked up and saw the great war-eagle sailing about over the village. Then they said: "The medicine of Crazy Wolf is good. We will listen to his words."

VII

LITTLE HAWK, THE SIOUX

LITTLE HAWK, like other Sioux boys of his age, had killed his share of rabbits, hawks, and similar game, but, although such exploits gave him experience, they did not entitle him to the honor he sought. He desired to be a warrior. To attain that exalted position a candidate had to go forth alone and show his courage. One of the accepted proofs was the killing of a grizzly bear. Therefore, Little Hawk determined to fulfil the requirement and claim the title.

He left the village at daylight, alone and on foot, and made his way boldly across the prairie, toward the distant range of snow-capped mountains. Frosts had already descended to the level country, and the young Sioux believed that the bears were moving upward to their dens. For two days Little Hawk traveled across the flat, sage-grown wastes, and the second night he arrived at the base of the mountains and went into camp.

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The next day he began to climb. Up, and up, and still higher up he toiled. The trees became fewer and smaller, rocks were everywhere, and great patches of snow appeared in the gullies. Little Hawk was compelled to stop for breath. Seated precariously upon a narrow platform of rock, he surveyed the scene spread out before him. Far below, the prairie held undisputed sway to the horizon. For some time the young Sioux fixed his attention on a cluster of distant objects which he thought were buffaloes. Then he resumed his climb, and finally came to the edge of a huge snow-field, which extended to the very summit.

It seemed as if he were climbing to the spirit world. The lad had never been so far above his native plain. Down there it was still late summer, and the air was filled with the song of birds and the perfume of flowers. But on the mountainside it was winter—he had entered the perpetual abode of snow and ice. His moccasins were wet and frozen, and climbing became difficult and dangerous.

Little Hawk had about decided to descend to the more hospitable plain when he suddenly came upon a trail of the animal he sought. He had never seen such monster tracks, but, recalling stories he had heard, he

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knew the footprints must have been made by a grizzly.

Excited and eager, the Sioux followed the trail. It led him across the face of treacherous snow-fields, along narrow, ice-coated ledges, and around dizzy, projecting barriers of rock. The bear had evidently been hunting the white sheep, and Little Hawk noted that its trail led along one of their narrow, uncertain paths. The tracks continued along a perpendicular wall of ice-crusted rock, and the Sioux followed cautiously, for a slip meant a fall to death in the cañon several thousand feet below.

Farther on a projecting bulge of the rocky wall cut deep into the trail, but the bear had managed in some manner to crawl around it. Little Hawk found holes for his hands and feet and was about to climb past the obstruction, when the crash of a dislodged boulder caused him to draw back suspiciously. "The bear is returning on its trail." That was what he thought.

The Sioux was in a perilous predicament. Unable to turn around, he was trapped on the narrow ledge of slippery rock. Step by step, he worked his way cautiously backward, in the hope of reaching a wider space. Then he heard something coming behind him. He

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turned his face, and was horrified to see an immense grizzly.

It was impossible to turn and confront the animal, and to climb around the jutting point of rock without knowing what was on the other side seemed equally foolhardy. The perplexed Sioux gazed hopelessly down into space, and then up at the towering wall of seamless rock. His only choice was to round the projection. And he must do it at once, for the grizzly was advancing and growling threateningly.

Little Hawk slung his bow across his back and attempted the hazardous feat. He dug his fingers and toes into narrow cracks in the granite and, straining every muscle in his active young body, crawled slowly around the obstruction and alighted safely on the other side.

He had scarcely recovered from his exertions and fitted an arrow before an angry snarl warned him of danger. Glancing toward the sound, the startled youth saw a second grizzly coming toward him. It was not as gigantic as the one on the other side of the rock, but it seemed plenty large enough at such close quarters.

Little Hawk crowded against the rocky wall and, taking careful aim, sent three arrows into

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the body of the bear. Roaring savagely, it rose unsteadily upon its hind legs and bore down upon its assailant.

Unable to move from the narrow trail, the Sioux determined to kill the infuriated creature before it reached him. Three times more his bowstring twanged, and each arrow came to a stop in the powerful body. The last one pierced the heart, and the savage brute lunged forward and slid to within a few inches of the young hunter. The grizzly was dead.

When he was sure that life had entirely departed, Little Hawk crawled over the carcass and wheeled to face the protruding rock. He believed that the second bear would eventually clamber around it, and hoped to add its scalp to his belt. Encouraged by his first success, the lad felt confident of killing the larger bear.

Finally the great beast appeared. It began to work its way carefully around the obstruction. This was the moment for which Little Hawk had been waiting. His hands worked like lightning and he sent a veritable shower of arrows into the body of the struggling bear. Weakened and mortally wounded, the doomed brute toppled off into space and crashed to its death.

Having given the war-cry of his people, for

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he was now a warrior, Little Hawk set about skinning the first bear. He rolled the pelt into a bundle and fastened it to his back. Then he pushed the body from the trail to lie beside his other victim on the rocks below.

Little Hawk had accomplished his purpose, his mission had been successful, and, with a light heart, he started down the mountain. The snow-fields proved even more dangerous to descend than to climb, but he finally zig-zagged his way safely across them and entered the timber. The Sioux continued to descend until he came to a rock-bound spring of purest water, and there he camped.

It was almost dark, and he walked out upon a commanding point of rock to search the prairie with his eyes. As he did so something drew his attention at once, and he dropped prone to avoid detection. Raising his head cautiously, the Sioux gazed long and anxiously.

His keen eyes had discovered a small party of horsemen some distance out on the plain. They seemed to be riding toward the very mountain on which he had hunted. He felt sure they were not Sioux, but was unable to positively identify them in the gathering gloom. From the size of the company and their waving head-dresses, Little Hawk feared they

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were on the war-trail. But why did they bring their ponies to the mountains? Perhaps they were fleeing from a larger war-party—possibly his own people were pursuing them. The young Sioux determined to watch and learn as much as possible concerning the approaching horsemen.

The riders finally halted at the edge of the timber. Several dismounted and disappeared into the forest. Then two of the party wheeled their mounts and galloped away on their back trail. Little Hawk was convinced that a pursuing party was not so very far in their rear. He believed that these riders had been sent to watch for its appearance.

The Sioux feared he had come in contact with a band of Pawnee scouts. In that case he was in an unenviable position. The newcomers would probably make a thorough search of the mountain and would be sure to discover his trail across the snow-fields. He would be unable to leave the timber if they posted guards along the edge of the plain, and they would beat the mountainside and shoot him down when he was forced from cover.

When it was dark the ponies were picketed within the heavy shadows at the base of the mountain. Then the warriors scattered through the woods. Little Hawk feared

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they had already found some sign of him and were endeavoring to drive him from his hiding-place.

As the night wore on the alarmed Sioux grew more apprehensive. He remained in hiding, fearful to move lest he should run into a prowling enemy in the darkness. He heard owls hooting and calling from various parts of the forest, and he knew that his enemies were signaling to one another. Little Hawk believed they were searching for him, and he determined on a daring plan of escape.

Crawling cautiously from his shelter, he stole noiselessly through the dark, silent woods. Stopping at frequent intervals to listen, he worked his way carefully down the mountainside, toward the prairie. A frightened deer jumped from cover close beside him, and Little Hawk leaped back, knife in hand, ready to close with an expected enemy. The deer continued its wild flight and the Sioux cunningly changed his course. He feared that when his enemies heard the deer they would back-track to learn the cause of its fright.

Little Hawk was close upon the edge of the plain when he heard the steady advance of a foe. A slight crackling of dead leaves, the

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snap of a brittle twig, heralded the passing of moccasined feet. The Sioux concealed himself to await the arrival of the unseen prowler.

Then the noise sounded within arm's-length of him, and, peering from his hiding-place, Little Hawk caught sight of a figure moving beneath the trees. But it instantly disappeared as the trailer passed on up the mountain. The young Sioux drew a breath of relief.

When he had allowed the mysterious stranger sufficient time to be well on his way, Little Hawk rose and hastened to the border of the plain. He crawled slowly along, from tree to tree, from bush to bush, stopping every few feet to gain sight or sound of his foes. A short distance in advance were the ponies. His one chance of escape lay in securing one of the fleet-footed animals and riding away under cover of darkness. It was a dangerous undertaking, for he knew that the ponies would be guarded by vigilant Pawnee warriors who would promptly set upon him and give the alarm. However, Little Hawk determined to run the risk.

The impatient stamp of a hoof caused him to lie close to the ground. Almost afraid to breathe, he raised his head and peered forward into the darkness. He saw nothing. His heart beat fast with excitement, his breath

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came in quick, short gasps, and his temples throbbed. Little Hawk believed that the supreme moment had come. Inch by inch he advanced. Then a fox yapped, and he halted—perhaps it was a signal.

The loud snort of a frightened pony and the crackling of brush as the startled animal endeavored to escape announced his approach. Little Hawk rose, and with his knife severed the bonds of the captive pony. Then, as the animal wheeled toward the open plain, he grasped its mane and jumped upon its back. A solitary figure rose out of the darkness to bar his path, but his knife-hand swept the fatal half-circle, and the way was cleared.

A series of wild yells sounded at the edge of the timber. Answering cries came from the mountainside. Then the noise of pounding hoofs rose behind him, and the Pawnee war-cry rang through the night.

Little Hawk soon discovered that he had chosen a good mount, and he urged it to top speed. He hoped to gain a good lead and then abruptly change his course and lose his pursuers in the blackness. He rode desperately, for his safety depended upon winning the first wild sprint of the long chase. The Sioux realized that his pursuers would be guided solely by the noise from his pony's hoofs.

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They would ride furiously to keep within sound of him. Once out of hearing he would be safe until daylight showed them the trail. And by that time he hoped to be many miles away. His task, therefore, was to gain a sufficient lead during the hours of darkness, and, bending low, he urged the wiry little pony to still greater trials of speed.

The sounds behind him increased, and Little Hawk knew that the entire war-party had joined the pursuit. But the Pawnee pony responded nobly to his frantic appeals, and the Sioux realized that he was gaining upon his pursuers. He knew that no horse could maintain the pace he was urging. Then he tried the experiment. Turning from his course, he rode swiftly away at right angles, hoping his pursuers would dash past the turning-point and lose him.

Great was the delight of the Sioux when he heard the discordant whoops of his pursuers far away on the false trail. They had overshot the mark, and he was safe until dawn.

Then the cries ceased, and Little Hawk knew that the Pawnees had discovered their blunder. They were making a silent, careful search for his trail. But they were unlikely to find it before daybreak, and, assured by the

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thought, the Sioux determined to keep riding through the balance of the night.

Daybreak found Little Hawk many miles from the scene of his exploit. He had again changed his course, and was making directly for the Sioux camp. The little buckskin pony had subsided into a shuffling half-trot. The daring young rider knew that a group of hard-riding, keen-eyed Pawnees were following, like a pack of wolves, on his trail. The idea caused him great uneasiness, and he urged his weary mount impatiently.

All day the tired pony and its tireless rider traveled toward the great Sioux camp. They passed bands of inquisitive antelope, towns of chattering prairie-dogs, vast herds of buffaloes, all unheeded. Little Hawk's one object was the consuming of distance, the shortening of that vast expanse of shelterless plain which stretched between him and his goal.

The day wore on, and with the passing of each hour the faltering little pony weakened. The half-trot dwindled to a slow unsteady walk, as with hanging head and listless glassy eyes the poor beast staggered along through the sage. The Sioux dismounted and walked ahead. As he trudged wearily along he listened apprehensively for the dreaded war-

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cry of his enemies. Should they come within sight of him his doom would be sealed.

The twilight descended, and still the Sioux walked before his mount. Rested by his thoughtfulness, the buckskin recuperated. It held its head erect and quickened its stride. Little Hawk saw the improvement and a great hope revived in his breast, for the Sioux camp was not far off.

When darkness finally blotted out the horizon, and night settled down, the pony suddenly stopped and turned its head expectantly into the wind. Before the alarmed Sioux could grasp its nose it wheeled and whinnied shrilly. The noise of hoof-beats came in reply. Little Hawk mounted in despair, and with thumps and kicks urged the buckskin into a feeble gallop.

Again the Pawnee yell rang through the night, and the unfortunate Sioux shuddered. He kicked the protruding ribs of the little buckskin and pounded its head with his fists. Darkness concealed him from his pursuers and he still hoped to escape and reach the Sioux camp.

But his enemies were fast closing the gap. Believing that he could not escape, they were yelling triumphantly. The exhausted pony was doing its best, but the race seemed hope-

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less. An arrow fell just behind the staggering beast, another thudded into the ground beside him, and Little Hawk saw death approaching. His pursuers were at his very heels, and the disheartened Sioux abandoned all hope. Then an arrow found him and burned its way deep into his shoulder.

With the pain of the wound the spirit of his people came to him. Turning his mount, he uttered the defiant war-cry of the Sioux nation, and fitting arrow after arrow to his bow, sent them at his nearest pursuers. The fighting fury was aroused, and it speedily drove out fear. Unafraid and scornful, the youth fought like a demon. Time after time his own yell answered those of the Pawnees. Twice more he felt the sting of arrows in his flesh. His indomitable will entered into the pony beneath him, and it increased its speed. Twisting and turning his active body, the wounded rider sent his arrows singing through the darkness.

Unwilling to come to close quarters, the wily Pawnees remained at a safe distance and endeavored to kill either the horse or the rider by a lucky shot with one of their arrows. They flanked the Sioux, but were unable to gain sufficiently to head him off.

Like an animal at bay, the young warrior

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fought desperately for his life. When he had shot his last arrow he drew his knife and determined to use it if his enemies came within range of his arm. He continued to yell and release his bowstring, and the Pawnees were deceived by the clever ruse and believed that he was still sending his arrows against them. Little Hawk raised his face and asked the Great Mystery for strength sufficient to reach the Sioux camp alive.

Suddenly his own whoop was echoed from the darkness, and half a hundred throats yelled encouragement to the faltering lad. Then he heard the rumble of many hoof-beats, and a great company of Sioux warriors charged past him. The fighting was fast and savage. The weakened youth would have ridden his mount into the thick of it, but he was suddenly swept from the back of the falling buckskin. Little Hawk found himself struggling feebly in the arms of old Chief Thunder Hawk, his father. The latter immediately attended the wounds of his son and carried him to the village in triumph.

When the victorious Sioux war-party returned there was feasting and dancing for several days. Little Hawk rose in council and told of his adventures. He exhibited the necessary trophies to prove his prowess, and

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among them was the faithful little buckskin which he had captured from the Pawnees. Then he claimed the title of warrior, and the people instantly acclaimed him and rechristened him Wounded Arrow.

VIII

LITTLE BEAVER, SON OF ROARING BEAR

THE Crows were at war with their old-time enemies, the Blackfeet. The latter had raided the Crow village and besides killing many people and running off a large herd of ponies they had carried away Roaring Bear, the great Crow war-chief. It was a stinging defeat, a severe shock to their vanity, and the Crows were downcast. The old men met and called for a council; they wished to be revenged.

The war-drums summoned the people from the lodges, and when they had gathered the council-circle was formed. The pipe was lighted and passed. Then old White Bird, the medicine-man, addressed the Crows. He declared that a great calamity had befallen them, and recited all the details of their recent defeat at the hands of the hated Blackfeet. He reminded them that their renowned chief was a prisoner in the hostile camp. He pictured

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the tortures that would be inflicted upon him. He said he saw many Crow scalps hanging from Blackfoot lodges. He asked to see a like number of Blackfoot scalps in the Crow village. He recalled the insults of the Blackfeet, who had called them women. Then he urged them to avenge themselves.

Little Beaver, the young son of Roaring Bear, cast aside his robe and rose to his feet. The people were astonished into silence. He was but a lad, and had no voice in the council. They marveled at his audacity, but their surprise made them curious and they allowed him to talk.

The youth reminded them that he was the son of Roaring Bear, their chief. He said he had had a vision and that his father had appeared and commanded him to talk to his people. Little Beaver told them their chief was still alive and that he had outlined a plan for his rescue. The young orator declared that he had been commissioned to undertake the daring stratagem. He warned the Crows against sending a war-party to the Blackfoot village, and said if they did this the prisoner would be killed at once. He made known his intention of starting at daylight on a solitary journey to the Blackfoot camp. He declared that his medicine had

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been made strong, and assured them that he would be successful. Little Beaver promised to return with his father before the fifth sun set. If he failed to do so, he said, they might send a war-party to avenge the deaths of Roaring Bear and himself.

The Crows were much impressed by the words of this untried young brave, and many noted warriors talked in his behalf. Finally it was decided that Little Beaver should be allowed to go to the Blackfoot camp.

That night he went to the medicine-lodge, and White Bird made many smokes to the Good Spirit for the safe return of Little Beaver and Roaring Bear. He taught the lad many mysteries and gave him much good advice, and Little Beaver remained in the lodge most of the night.

When daylight came he mounted his father's favorite war-pony, which had somehow escaped the Blackfoot raid, and rode from the village. He carried the bow, quiver, and war-shield of Roaring Bear and his own knife and robe. His long hair, for which the Crows were noted, was carefully oiled and braided, and in his scalp-lock was a single eagle feather. Little Beaver was a handsome youth, active and sinewy, and the people looked admiringly after him as he rode away on his first war-

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trail. Old White Bird cackled joyously and said: "He is the son of his father; he will return."

The Blackfoot camp was situated at the base of the mountains; it was a full two days' journey toward the rising sun. By the time the great red orb showed in the sky Little Beaver had ridden from the sight of his own village. One by one the glories of a new day unfolded themselves, and the young brave found it good to be alive. The cool air from the mountains swept his brow; the spicy breath of the sage delighted his nostrils; and the sunshine warmed his heart and made him bold. He believed that his medicine had been made strong, and he gave thanks to the Good Spirit.

It was his first war-trail, and Little Beaver was unusually cautious. His keen eyes constantly searched the plain for some sign of danger. He knew that marauding war-parties of Blackfeet were abroad and he wished to avoid them. Although he saw bands of antelope and large herds of buffaloes, he dared not turn aside to hunt them. He had sufficient jerked meat to last him on his journey, and he was anxious to reach the Blackfoot camp as soon as possible.

When the sun was low in the western sky

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Little Beaver came upon a grove of aspens which gave promise of a water-hole. He was careful to ride about the circle of trees for a thorough reconnaissance before he trusted himself within arrow-range. He feared that enemies might be hiding there, and he determined to take no unnecessary risks. When he failed to discover any signs of concealed foes he rode away at an angle and dropped to the side of his mount. Thus sheltered, he approached the water-hole. He found it unoccupied, and threw himself down to drink. There was an abundance of grass for his horse and water and shelter for himself, so Little Beaver decided to spend the night there.

When night had thrown its black mantle over the earth Little Beaver walked to the edge of the timber and stood to listen at the border of the plain. High above him the stars twinkled and blazed the trail to the Spirit Land, and he wondered if his father had already started on that journey; at his back the restless leaves of the aspens trembled and crackled; at his feet he heard the stealthy passage of the night-wind through the sage. Then he started, for he heard something more. Hoof-beats echoed faintly through the darkness—some one was riding toward the water-hole.

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Little Beaver turned in panic and hurried to the head of his pony. Fearful that the animal might call and betray him, he smothered its nose with a piece of buckskin. Then he led it carefully away from the water-hole.

Once on the prairie, the Crow restrained his pony and compelled it to walk. He knew that galloping hoofs would be instantly heard by the approaching horsemen. His one chance of escape was flight. He planned to lead his pony quietly out of ear-shot, and then to mount and ride until daylight.

But suddenly he halted in dismay, for the riders had swerved from their course. They were evidently circling the water-hole in an endeavor to learn if it contained visitors. If he were trapped between them and the little patch of timber he would undoubtedly be discovered. He must lead his pony far enough away to avoid being taken in their loop.

Pulling and urging, Little Beaver dragged forward his unwilling mount. Nearer and nearer came the galloping ponies and their unknown riders, and his own horse rebelled at the sound and would have loitered to meet its kind. The lad became panic-stricken. He was directly in the path of the approaching riders. With almost superhuman strength he pulled the resisting brute from the line of

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danger. Then, as he stood trembling at his horse's head, he heard his enemies race past within bow-shot of him. When they had turned to complete their circle Little Beaver mounted and rode away.

It had been a thrilling experience, and having passed safely through it the lad felt much encouraged. At the first encounter he had outwitted his adversaries, and by so doing he had gained confidence. But he realized, too, that still graver dangers threatened him, and the thought sobered him and made him serious. Then the fear that his father had been killed entered his mind and weakened him. Worried and perplexed, he turned his face to the heavens and bared his soul to the Great Spirit, and at once his heart grew strong and his fears vanished.

Little Beaver traveled until dawn had blazed its trail across the eastern sky; then he rode into a shallow ravine and went into hiding. At frequent intervals, as the day wore on, he climbed the steep sides of his hiding-place and, with only his head in sight, made sweeping surveys of the shelterless plain. Before him, less than a day's journey away, were the mountains, and somewhere near their base was the hostile Blackfoot camp.

The brook-bed in which he had taken shel-

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ter was dry, and before many hours had passed both Little Beaver and his mount suffered severely from thirst. The sun shone with unabated fury, and stifling heat-waves rose from the parched ground. Little Beaver told himself that it was the duty of warriors to endure such things. To bring moisture to his mouth he placed a pebble beneath his tongue; then he drew his robe over his head and sought repose in the shadow from his horse. The pony, however, was restless, and it scraped its unshod hoofs against the sun-baked earth in a vain attempt to find water. By doing this it raised a dust cloud, and, fearful that it might betray him, Little Beaver threw the restive animal and tied its feet with his raw-hide lariat. Then he settled down to wait for darkness and the opportunity to approach the Blackfoot village.

Climbing to the top of the ravine some time later, he saw a number of mounted warriors riding toward his shelter. They came from the direction of the mountains, and Little Beaver believed them to be a war-party despatched from the village. If they were, the unknown riders of the night before probably were scouts who had been sent forward to reconnoiter and make safe the advance of the war-party.

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The Blackfeet were some distance away, and Little Beaver continued to watch them. It was evident that they intended to cross the ravine. If he remained in his hiding-place they would be sure to see him; if he left it and fled over the prairie they would pursue him. For a few moments the young brave was worried and undecided. Then he slid to the bottom of the ravine and began to search for a place of concealment.

The dry brook-bed was tortuous, and Little Beaver followed it until he found a place where it turned at a right angle. If the riders held to their course this spot would screen him from their sight.

Once more he climbed the bank and saw the war-party continuing in its original course. The riders were much nearer, and he had little time to spare.

With his knife he severed the bonds of his pony. Then he led it along the ravine until he came to the abrupt turn. To guard against an outcry he covered the pony's head with his robe, and, satisfied that they were invisible, he crouched beside his horse and waited in breathless suspense for the war-party to pass.

When the Blackfeet had crossed the ravine and gone on their way, Little Beaver felt

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much relieved. He began to hope, too, that there were few warriors in the village. He was impatient for night.

As soon as it was dark Little Beaver rode toward the Blackfoot camp. He was ignorant of its exact location, and he traveled carefully, while he used his eyes and ears to help him find it. At last he saw the great black forms of the mountains directly before him and he knew that he was within striking distance of his enemies. Then his pony snorted and wheeled toward the timber, and Little Beaver heard the sound of running water. A moment later he was drinking at the edge of an icy stream which tumbled down from the snow-clad peaks above him.

Little Beaver believed the Blackfoot camp to be near this very stream. When he had relieved his parched throat he concealed his pony in the timber. Then he cautiously made his way along the stream. The night was almost gone and he was anxious to locate the Blackfoot camp before daylight. He finally discovered it in a grove of willows. Well satisfied with his work, he retraced his course and went into hiding with his pony.

Daylight showed Little Beaver the lodges, the dogs, and some of the inmates of the Blackfoot village. He saw only a few ponies,

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and he interpreted this to mean that most of the warriors had gone with the war-party. But before the day was over they returned with many others. The camp was filled with fighting-men, and Little Beaver lost heart. His danger had increased and his chance of success had diminished. However, he continued to watch, hoping for some unlooked-for opportunity to rescue his father.

The ponies of the returned war-party were turned loose, and they immediately scattered to feed. A few wandered toward the timber, and Little Beaver watched them covetously. A clean-limbed little piebald drew away from its comrades, and, watching his opportunity, Little Beaver stole forward and led it into captivity. He twisted a rawhide thong about its lower jaw and tied the captive beside his own mount.

Then a commotion at the village drew his attention, and he deserted the ponies and returned to the edge of the plain. What he saw drove the fighting blood to his brain and turned his heart black with anger. His father, the great chief Roaring Bear, had been sent out with several old women to gather wood. It was the greatest insult the Blackfeet could offer, and the warriors added to it by jeering and laughing from the edge of the camp.

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For an instant Little Beaver thought of rushing from cover to battle with the entire Blackfoot tribe. Then he saw the foolishness of such a vain display of bravery. He told himself that he had come to save his father, not to avenge him. If he would accomplish his purpose he must be patient and calm and calculating. Realizing this, the trembling lad crouched lower in his cover and watched, with hate-glowing eyes, the distressing scene before him.

Little Beaver saw that his father had a bag on his back, into which the cackling old squaws deposited their armfuls of wood. The observing lad also noted that Roaring Bear's hands were free, but that his feet were loosely tied with short lengths of buckskin. His steps, therefore, were slow and faltering. Little Beaver noted, furthermore, that the prisoner and his female guard were constantly drawing nearer his hiding-place, and this gave him hope. He counted each step forward, and as they continued to advance he formed his plan.

Twilight began to settle, but still Roaring Bear and the old women persisted in their search of wood. Many of the braves had tired of making sport of the spectacle, and had retired into the village. A few still lounged about the outside and called mockingly to the

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captive chief, and at each insult to his father Little Beaver half rose and swept his right hand to his knife-hilt. He believed that his father was purposely delaying the return to the village, with the idea of making an attempt at escape.

When the wood-gatherers were out of bow-shot from the village, Little Beaver determined to try his plan. Rising, he sent two arrows harmlessly over the heads of the old women. Before they had recovered from their surprise he rushed upon them, brandishing his knife and whooping fiercely. Shrieking in fear, the squaws deserted their captive and fled toward the village.

It took Little Beaver only an instant to free the feet of his father, and Roaring Bear ran after him into the timber. They hurried to the horses, and, when they reached them, they mounted and rode out upon the plain. Straight into the herd of Blackfoot ponies they rode, Roaring Bear whooping in triumph and Little Beaver waving his robe. The animals instantly became frightened and galloped away in a wild stampede; and the Blackfeet were compelled to start a hopeless chase on foot.

Two days later the Crows saw a large herd of ponies racing toward the camp. The warriors mounted the few horses the Blackfeet

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had left them and went forward to round them up. Then they began to shout and sing their war-songs, for they recognized Little Beaver, and beside him they saw Roaring Bear, their chief.

“It is well Little Beaver is the son of his father, his medicine is strong, and his heart is brave; let us call him Fighting Bear,” laughed old White Bird as he came running from the medicine-lodge.

IX

A PAWNEE SCOUT

SPOTTED WEASEL slid from his pony to watch two columns of black smoke which were rising into the sky far away to the west. As the young Pawnee gazed upon them, the smoke pillars began to twist and break and ascend in great cloud-like puffs. Then they joined, and Spotted Weasel knew it was a signal. He believed it came from a war-party of Sioux, who were calling their people together for a great war-council.

War having already been declared between the Sioux and the Pawnees, Spotted Weasel had been sent to watch for just such signals as he had discovered. Well pleased with his success, therefore, the young Pawnee threw himself upon the plain and studied the distant spirals of smoke with much interest.

It was not long before the lad's keen eyes discovered a third smoke signal, very far away and barely perceptible against the eastern sky.

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It was evident that a second company of Sioux were replying to the signals of their tribesmen. Shading his eyes with his hands, the young Pawnee transferred his attention to the new signal. It was so far away that he could make little of it, but he believed it was a prompt acceptance of the call for a council.

A few moments later Spotted Weasel looked away toward the north, and there, too, he saw a smoke signal rising against the sky. The young Pawnee thus found himself in the center of a triangle of hostile war-parties. Undismayed by his peril, the courageous young scout remained to watch the signals. When they finally ceased he mounted his pony and rode boldly across the plain.

Some distance away a small wooded hill rose from the plain and stretched a long timbered arm out across the flat sage-brush country. The young Pawnee rode toward it. He planned to conceal himself on the hillside to watch for his enemies.

The sun was setting as Spotted Weasel finally reached the base of the hill and rode cautiously into the timber. Then he dismounted and led his pony up the steep rocky hillside until he found a suitable place of concealment. He stopped by the side of a tiny stream which trickled down through the

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woods over great moss-covered rocks. After the pony had satisfied its thirst the young Pawnee muzzled the animal with a piece of buckskin to prevent it from calling to the Sioux war-ponies which he felt sure would soon pass across the plain. Then he picketed the pony in a dense stand of aspens, and concealed himself close by to watch for his foes. From his hiding-place he could scan the flat, open country for many miles on both sides of the hill. Spotted Weasel watched steadily until dark, but saw nothing except a few roving bands of antelope and several small herds of buffaloes.

Although the Sioux and the Pawnees were at war, as yet no great battles had been fought. Hostilities had not developed further than a few skirmishes between wandering parties of hunters, and one or two minor encounters between scattered companies of scouts. Both tribes, however, were preparing for a decisive conflict. The Sioux were gathering the widely separated tribes of their great nation for a crushing blow against their foes. In the mean time the Pawnees had assembled in one vast camp, and had then sent forth many scouts to find and follow the Sioux, that they might warn their people as to the exact whereabouts and numbers of the war-parties moving against

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them. Spotted Weasel was one of the scouts selected for this dangerous work.

As the night wore on and he heard nothing to arouse his fears, the young Pawnee made his way to the edge of the plain, so that he would be better able to hear the hoof-beats of any passing company of horsemen who might be traveling to join their tribesmen under cover of the night. Wrapped in his robe, Spotted Weasel seated himself in the dense thicket which skirted the base of the hill. As he sat there listening for sounds of his foes, he turned his eyes to the star-lit heavens and opened his heart to the Great Mystery. A band of skulking coyotes howled their challenge through the dark, and then all was still. Several times Spotted Weasel crawled cautiously from his cover and lay with his ear to the plain, in an effort to catch the sound of horses. All he heard was the soft rustling of the sage, as the night wind passed gently between the twisted branches.

Then the noise of many hoofs suddenly reverberated through the night, and Spotted Weasel leaned forward, listening anxiously. A moment afterward he heard the shrill call of his pony. It had freed itself of the buck-skin muzzle and was snorting and thrashing about in wild efforts to escape and join its

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kind, which were passing across the plain. The young Pawnee's heart filled with despair, for he feared that he had been betrayed to his enemies.

The noise of the hoofs ceased. It was evident that the horsemen had stopped upon hearing the unexpected challenge from the hillside. Then, as the eager lad strained his ears to catch a warning from his foes, he heard a low guarded call echo across the plain. The unknown travelers were attempting to learn whether the hill was occupied by a party of their own people. As the signal went unanswered, however, they knew that they had stumbled upon an enemy, and as they were unaware how strong a force might be hiding in the timber, they withdrew from arrow-range and went into council.

Aware that he had been discovered, the dismayed young Pawnee was undecided as to just what he should do. For a moment he thought of rushing recklessly out upon the plain, but an instant afterward he realized that such folly would mean sure death. Still, he believed that to remain where he was might be equally perilous, for if the Sioux once surrounded the hill all escape would be shut off.

A few moments later the Sioux began to close in upon the hill. Realizing that if he

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remained in the timber he would soon be found, Spotted Weasel abandoned his pony and crawled cautiously into the sage. Stopping to listen, he heard the horsemen separate into two companies, one to search each side of the hill. Having learned that much, the young scout wriggled snake-wise through the sage, in the hope of eventually escaping under cover of the darkness.

Spotted Weasel had not gone far, however, before he heard signals rising on all sides of him, and for a moment he lost heart as he realized that he was surrounded by a slowly contracting circle of sharp-eyed Sioux scouts. He knew only too well the fate that awaited him if he were captured. His one chance was to crawl between the sentinels under protection of the night, and he determined to make the attempt.

Aware that discovery meant death, Spotted Weasel moved through the sage as noiselessly as a wolf. As he advanced, however, the circle of riders slowly closed in until he could hear the voices of the nearest horsemen. Then he stopped. He told himself that he would soon learn his fate. Unmoved by the probability of capture and death at the hands of his foes, the courageous lad fitted an arrow to his bow and prepared to drive the missile into

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the heart of the first Sioux warrior that barred his way.

Then, for some reason, the horsemen stopped, and the young Pawnee waited in an agony of suspense. At last he determined to advance. He crept cautiously forward, prepared to defend himself at the first hint of danger. Then a pony snorted within bow-shot of him and he sank noiselessly to the plain. Long, torturing moments passed while Spotted Weasel lay in the sage, afraid to move. As he heard nothing of his foes, he began to fear that they had dismounted and were advancing stealthily through the dark on foot. His heart bounded at the thought, for he realized that such a manoeuvre would make escape almost impossible. Then he heard his pony call from the hillside, and his eyes flashed angrily. A moment later his sharp ears caught the sound of sage scraping against buckskin leggings, and he knew that his fears had been realized—the wily Sioux scouts had dismounted and were approaching on foot.

Spotted Weasel swerved from his course to avoid a warrior whose careful approach he had at that moment discovered. The alarmed lad had not gone an arrow-flight, however, when he found himself confronted by another crafty foe. Realizing the impossibility of

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avoiding them, the young Pawnee flattened himself against the plain and waited breathlessly, in the hope that they might pass without discovering him.

Then Spotted Weasel saw a sudden flash of light behind him. A moment afterward a ruddy glow appeared at the base of the hill. The sound of snapping twigs warned him of what had happened, and in an instant the whole cunning stratagem suggested itself to his mind. The main company of warriors, having scouted over the hill and found the picketed pony, had learned that the solitary fugitive had retreated to the open plain. Believing that he was hiding somewhere in the sage, they were making a great fire of brushwood in the hope that its light would reveal their foe to the sharp eyes of the unmounted scouts on the plain.

For a moment the despairing young Pawnee was on the verge of panic. He saw no way now of avoiding capture, and it seemed foolhardy to make the attempt. Each moment the flames were mounting higher, and the fatal circle of light was slowly widening. Spotted Weasel realized that there was not a moment to spare—to hesitate was to perish. The thought roused him to action. He told himself that it was the part of a coward to

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meekly surrender to his foes. Besides, his people were depending upon him, and if he failed to bring them the warning for which they were waiting, the Sioux might surprise and almost annihilate the Pawnee camp. Driven to a frenzy by the thought, Spotted Weasel determined to escape from his foes.

Slowly, a hand-length at a time, the young Pawnee wriggled along on his stomach toward the line of sharp-eyed Sioux scouts. He heard the steady crackle of the flames behind him, and glancing uneasily over his shoulder he saw a broad crescent of yellow light spreading rapidly across the plain. The shadows were retreating ahead of him, and he knew that he must keep up with them if he would avoid discovery. He had approached within striking distance of the nearest Sioux, and only slightly farther away to his right he heard another. To escape he must pass between them.

However, as Spotted Weasel hesitated, the sentinels shifted their positions and left a wider gap between them. The glare from the fire had almost overtaken him, and the young scout realized that a moment's delay would be fatal. Turning his face to the heavens, he prayed earnestly to the Great Mystery. Then he crawled boldly forward and passed his foes under cover of the darkness.

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The plain between the hill and the circle of scouts was now brilliantly illuminated. Each bunch of sage showed forth gray and distinct in the flickering glare. A triumphant shout rose from the Sioux, for they believed that somewhere on that strip of lighted prairie an enemy lay at their mercy. The scouts had mounted and were riding slowly forward. Every boulder was carefully examined, each patch of sage was beaten, in the hope of discovering the concealed foe. Then, when they had finally searched every inch of the ground without finding the one whom they sought, the Sioux realized that he had escaped. The thought drove them into a frenzy of rage. Yelling wildly, the entire company mounted their ponies and dashed aimlessly about the black plain in an effort to run down the unknown scout who had eluded them.

Once through the Sioux lines, Spotted Weasel rose to his feet and hurried away through the sage. The village of his people was several sleeps distant, and, alone and on foot, he had little hope of reaching it. His first desire, therefore, was to travel as far as possible before daylight.

Then the pounding of hoofs and the yells of the riders reached his ears. He stopped at the sounds, and his sharp eyes peered vainly

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into the darkness in search of a hiding-place. It seemed as if the entire plain was covered with a horde of yelling horsemen. Whichever way he turned he heard them in front of him. As he stood there, listening, a pony thundered toward him, and the startled lad had only time to throw himself prone before the yelling warrior dashed past within bow-length of him. For some moments the young Pawnee lay where he had fallen. All about him echoed the thunder of unshod hoofs, while the night rang with the piercing war-whoops of the vengeful Sioux horsemen.

The war-party finally rode on, however, and Spotted Weasel heard them yelling far ahead of him. He realized that for the moment he was spared, but the thought gave him little comfort, for he knew that his plight was now even more desperate than it had been. He was again in the center of a great circle of Sioux horsemen, powerless to move in any direction without once more penetrating their lines. The thought weakened his confidence. For a long time he remained in hiding. Then, when the noise from the riders finally died out in the distance, he rose and resumed his perilous advance.

Spotted Weasel had gone a considerable distance before he heard the baffled Sioux re-

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turning. Once more he concealed himself in a clump of sage and waited for them to pass. It was evident that the Sioux had abandoned all idea of capturing him, for they were riding carelessly and conversing in loud tones without any attempt at concealment. The young Pawnee crouched in his hiding-place, and smiled grimly as he heard his unsuspecting foes ride by in the darkness.

When the Sioux passed from hearing, Spotted Weasel left his shelter and continued his journey across the vast starlit plain. He knew that he had been close to death, and he stopped and gave thanks to the Great Mystery for his deliverance. All through the night he kept to his tireless stride, and when daylight finally dawned he stopped at a water-hole to drink and refresh himself.

While Spotted Weasel was resting beside the little pool he turned his attention upon a distant cloud of dust which rose behind a low rise of the plain. He knew it came from the feet of many animals. Perhaps it rose from a herd of buffaloes, or a band of antelope, or more probably from the ponies of another Sioux war-party. His heart bounded at the thought and he became alert and suspicious.

Concealing himself behind a large boulder, the young Pawnee watched the dust-cloud

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with considerable anxiety. At last he saw a thin, black line moving slowly across the plain. A few moments of careful observation convinced him that it was a company of horsemen. He felt sure that they were Sioux, and as they seemed to be traveling directly toward the water-hole his heart filled with gloomy forebodings.

Spotted Weasel's first impulse was to rise and seek safety in flight. Except for the two great boulders between which he had crawled, and the little circle of trees about the water-hole, the plain was bare and shelterless, and he soon realized the folly of his plan. He knew that to expose himself to the approaching war-party would invite instant pursuit, with the certainty of speedy capture and death at the hands of his foes. To remain at the water-hole meant a desperate battle for his life against overwhelming odds. After a moment's deliberation he chose the latter alternative. He believed that from his position between the boulders he could fight off his pursuers until darkness came to his aid. Then he would again attempt to crawl away from his foes. Determined and unafraid, therefore, he decided to risk his life on the outcome of this hazardous manœuver.

As the Sioux finally approached, Spotted

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Weasel fitted an arrow to his bow and waited with calm indifference for his enemies to come within range. He felt comparatively safe between the two massive boulders which formed his barricade, and he believed that he held his foes at a serious disadvantage.

When the war-party was sufficiently near, Spotted Weasel sounded the Pawnee battle-cry and discharged an arrow at the foremost rider. It fell short, however, and struck the ground at the feet of the frightened pony.

The astonished Sioux instantly turned their ponies and retreated from arrow-range. It was evident that they suspected a Pawnee ambushade at the water-hole. As they gathered in council, Spotted Weasel was somewhat encouraged to find that there were fewer warriors than he had supposed in the war-party.

After his first bold attack the young Pawnee made no further move, and the Sioux were unable to guess the strength of the force concealed about the pool. Spotted Weasel knew that it was only a question of moments, however, before they would learn the truth, and then he felt sure his stronghold would be attacked with great fury. He knew that if his foes chose to expose themselves they could easily overwhelm him, and he would be killed like a wolf in a trap.

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In the mean time the Sioux had begun to ride slowly about the water-hole. They were evidently trying to learn the strength of the enemy, for at frequent intervals a solitary horseman would leave the circle and ride recklessly toward the water-hole, hoping to draw a volley of arrows. Then the entire company began shooting their arrows into the little group of trees, with the expectation of receiving a volley in return, which might enable them to estimate the numbers opposing them.

Spotted Weasel took great satisfaction in seeing them waste their arrows. Then, their ruse having failed, the Sioux seemed to suddenly guess the true state of affairs. They began to whoop excitedly and discharge their arrows at the rocks which sheltered their youthful foe. The young Pawnee felt sure that they had discovered him. A moment later they began to ride in upon him, but he rose to his knees and drove them back with a deadly volley of arrows.

Aware that they were confronted by a lone representative of their hated enemies, the Sioux separated and surrounded him. Then they made a concerted attack from front and rear, but the courageous young Pawnee again drove them off. They began to realize that his position was well-nigh impregnable. They withdrew, therefore, to hold another council.

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As they retreated from arrow-range Spotted Weasel rose and began to taunt them. He dared them to come forward and capture him, and accused them of being cowards.

Roused by his words, the Sioux turned about and charged in a body. Spotted Weasel knew that the supreme moment had arrived. His bowstring twanged many times, and each time an arrow sped true to its mark. This time, however, the enraged Sioux were not to be stopped, and in spite of his heroic resistance they were soon upon him.

Shouting defiance, Spotted Weasel rose and discharged his arrow at the nearest horseman, who was leaning toward him with upraised tomahawk. Then, as the rider plunged headlong to the plain, the alert young Pawnee leaped upon the back of the Sioux pony. Urging it to a wild burst of speed, he dashed away with the entire war-party in close pursuit. Realizing that the success of his daring manœuver depended upon holding his pursuers at a safe distance, Spotted Weasel turned and dropped the nearest ponies with his arrows. Then he crouched low on the neck of his mount and fled at top speed. Arrows seemed to fill the air, and the young Pawnee heard several whiz by close to his head. Having gained somewhat on his pursuers, he made

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no attempt to return their volleys, but confined his efforts to his pony.

The chase led out across the vast plain, toward a distant range of mountains, where Spotted Weasel hoped to find shelter in a rock-bound cañon. The lad had not gone far, however, before one of the Sioux overtook him. Dropping behind his horse, Spotted Weasel discharged his arrow from beneath the animal's neck. The Sioux reeled, clutched wildly at the air, and toppled backward over the rump of his pony. The Pawnee reached over and grasped the twisted rawhide lariat which dangled from the animal's lower jaw. Then, with the infuriated yells of his foes to spur him on, he raced along in possession of the riderless pony.

Spotted Weasel soon realized that the animal he had just captured was far swifter than the one he rode. He jumped from one horse to the other, and then, abandoning the slower mount, he shook his weapons derisively at his enemies and raced on toward the cañon. The new pony gained steadily upon his pursuers, and soon opened a long gap between the delighted young Pawnee and the foremost riders of the war-party. Having passed from arrow-range, Spotted Weasel sat up and looked behind him.

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It was evident that the Sioux had no idea of abandoning the chase, for they were whooping and urging on their ponies at top speed in a vain endeavor to overtake him.

Now that he was momentarily out of danger, Spotted Weasel felt the sharp twinge of several wounds. Assuring himself that they were not serious, he scorned the pain and rode on with his eyes fixed hopefully on the distant mountain range.

Then the pony stumbled and plunged to its knees. As the nimble beast recovered itself Spotted Weasel heard something snap, and a great fear entered his heart. A moment later he saw it realized as the gallant little pony began to falter. He saw at once that it had been badly lamed. Despite his desperate urging, the crippled pony steadily lost ground. It had splintered one of the smaller bones in the right fore leg. The young Pawnee was driven to a frenzy of despair. Almost within reach of the shelter toward which he had been racing he seemed doomed to suffer defeat and death.

He glanced fearfully over his shoulder and saw that the Sioux were gaining rapidly upon the crippled beast beneath him. He used every means in his power to force it to a faster pace, but the best it could do was a slow, faltering canter. Spotted Weasel realized that

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his end was near. With a disabled horse beneath him, and his pursuers gaining at every stride, there seemed little likelihood of escape. He drew an arrow and fitted it to his bow, determined to pierce the first of his foes that came within range.

It was evident that the wily Sioux had already guessed that some misfortune had befallen their enemy, for they were yelling triumphantly and beating their ponies unmercifully. As they drew nearer they spread out into a wide, fan-like formation so that they might attack the Pawnee on all sides.

Once his pursuers were in range, however, Spotted Weasel began the fight. In the first exchange of arrows his pony received a Sioux shaft through the heart and dropped dead beneath him. Believing that his death was only a matter of moments, the courageous lad sheltered himself behind the body of his horse and prepared to fight to the end.

As usual, the cautious Sioux drew off and began to canter around their adversary.

Aware that he was entirely at their mercy, they were anxious to kill him with the least possible risk to themselves. They raced wildly about him, therefore, clinging to the sides of their ponies and discharging their arrows with little effect.

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Thus the unequal fight continued for some time. Then, realizing that those tactics gained them nothing, the Sioux attempted to ride him down, but the wounded Pawnee fought so furiously that they were compelled to scatter and retreat in disorder. Then for a long time they cantered slowly around him, exposing themselves in an effort to draw his arrows. He was too wise to fall into the trap, however, and for a time hostilities ceased.

While Spotted Weasel was waiting for the next attack from his foes he saw a large company of horsemen coming from the distant cañon. His last hope fled, for he told himself that still another war-party of Sioux were coming to join their tribesmen. They had urged their ponies into a furious gallop and were making directly for the scene of battle. His eyes flashed as he realized the hopelessness of the odds against him. He knew it was useless, but, nevertheless, he determined to fight on till his last arrow was gone or one from the enemy pierced his heart.

The Sioux, too, were watching the approaching horsemen. Then, having apparently recognized them, they began a furious attack upon Spotted Weasel. They had identified the new-comers as Pawnees, and as they greatly outnumbered the Sioux, the latter

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realized that they must flee to save themselves. They were making one final attempt to kill the valiant youth who had defied them before they were compelled to retreat from his tribesmen.

Spotted Weasel heard the war-cry of his people issue from a hundred throats, and he raised his own voice in reply. Then, like a wounded panther at bay, he turned to meet the vicious onslaught of the Sioux. His tribesmen were shouting encouragement and riding furiously to his aid. Although he was desperately wounded, the sight of his people gave him courage and he fought savagely to save his life. Turning, twisting, dodging, he managed somehow to survive until the Sioux finally turned in panic and fled before the superior force of Pawnees.

Singing Hawk, the great Pawnee war-chief, stooped and lifted the unconscious lad from the ground. They carried him to the cañon and placed him upon buffalo-robcs beside a clear cold stream that trickled down from the snow-clad peaks. Then, as they were dressing his wounds, Spotted Weasel regained consciousness. The following day he was placed on a stretcher made of poles and buckskin, which was slung between two ponies, and carried to the far-away Pawnee camp.

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The main company of Pawnees, having learned the location of the Sioux rendezvous from Spotted Weasel, summoned all their people to join them, and then went against the Sioux and completely surprised and defeated them. When they finally returned in triumph to the Pawnee camp, they brought many captured ponies, and among them was the little buckskin which Spotted Weasel had abandoned on the hillside.

X

THE WHITE BUFFALO

MEDICINE ELK, the venerable Pawnee war-chief, had offered ten of his best ponies for the robe of the white buffalo. Stimulated by his offer, the most renowned hunters in the tribe departed on the quest. They scattered to the four winds and began to ride the prairie in search of buffaloes. They found the animals in countless numbers, but none of the vast herds contained the coveted trophy.

The second day, Yellow Bird, the youngest member of the hunting-party, left his companions and rode away toward the north. He had heard tales of immense herds of buffaloes in the land of the Sioux, and he determined to verify them. There was great danger in such a journey, but the lad was fearless. He was an orphan, and very poor, and there would be no one to mourn him if he were killed. Besides his weapons, his sole possession was the buck-

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skin pony beneath him. It was a famous buffalo horse, and he had inherited it from his father, who had been killed by the Blackfeet when they carried away his squaw.

Four days' travel brought Yellow Bird to the land of the Sioux. It was as he had heard—the plains were covered with buffaloes. It seemed as if he had entered the Great Hunting Ground. Yellow Bird scarcely could believe his eyes. Wherever he looked he saw great herds of buffaloes. He believed that among such vast numbers he surely would find the white trophy which would bring him fame and riches.

The day was far spent, and Yellow Bird decided to postpone his hunt until the morrow. His journey had been an exhausting one, and his pony needed rest. He rode to the base of the mountains, and followed a stream to a grassy plateau, where he made his camp. When darkness fell he picketed his mount, for he had seen bear-tracks on the mountain-side and he feared the buckskin might stampepe if the bear appeared.

At daylight he was awakened by the rumbling of the great bulls on the plain below him. The scene was one to quicken the pulse of the most hardened hunter. Yellow Bird looked upon it in amazement. The buffaloes had

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scattered to feed and the plain was covered as if with a huge brown robe. The great beasts were divided into various bands, and each band had its sentinels. They were huge, shaggy-headed bulls, veterans of many gory battles. They were constantly on the alert for danger, and if foe or rival came too near they first threatened and then charged. Sometimes a rival bull challenged their leadership, and then there was sure to be a terrific encounter, which continued until one of the contestants was vanquished. Yellow Bird witnessed several such contests, and his eyes glowed with excitement. He noticed that the younger bulls gave the surly old warriors a wide berth, and he appreciated their prudence. The center of each herd was composed of cows and calves, the latter remaining close beside their mothers. Yellow Bird saw the reason for their timidity when he discovered a company of skulking gray brutes loitering cautiously at the edge of the herd. They were wolves, and he knew they were there because of the calves. But the watchful old bulls kept their eyes on them, and when they ventured too near these faithful guardians rushed at them and drove them away. The sight was one long to be remembered; Yellow Bird had heard noted hunters describe it at the council-

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fire, and now that he had it before him he determined to memorize every incident.

But his sharp eyes suddenly discovered something which claimed his whole attention. Near the edge of a large herd far away to the right he saw the animal for which he was searching. For a moment he was afraid to trust his sight, but when it did not vanish or change color under his eager scrutiny he knew it was real. An instant later it moved apart from its fellows and he saw it distinctly. It was a pure-white yearling buffalo.

Yellow Bird led his pony into concealment at the edge of the plain, and sat down to plan an approach which would take him within arrow range. It was not an easy task, for there were many difficulties to overcome. He realized that to be successful he must separate the white buffalo and its companions from the rest of the herd. Unless he could do this it might be lost to sight in the confusion of a general stampede. Several pony-lengths already separated this band from their fellows, and the Pawnee waited anxiously for them to increase the distance. At last his patience was rewarded, for the white yearling, with about thirty companions, left the herd and wandered away in search of new pasturage.

The Pawnee raced his pony across the plain

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in an endeavor to cut them off. His appearance threw the herd into great confusion. The old bulls rumbled and threatened; the cows crowded together in panic; and the calves, sensing danger from the general consternation, bawled with fear.

Yellow Bird gave no heed to them. He kept his eyes on the band which sheltered the white buffalo. As he approached they broke into a lumbering gallop, and the enthusiastic young hunter began to whoop exultantly. It was no task for the fleet-footed little buckskin to overtake the awkward fugitives, and in less than a mile the Pawnee found himself within bow-shot. But the white buffalo had crowded to the center, and its companions shielded it from his arrows. Yellow Bird urged his pony among them and endeavored to force his way to the side of the white yearling. It was dangerous work, and if his pony had stumbled he would have been instantly killed. But the buckskin was well trained, and it carried its rider safely to the desired position. Then Yellow Bird sounded his war-cry and buried two arrows behind the left shoulder of the yearling. It went to its knees in a cloud of dust, and its companions divided around it and abandoned it to its fate.

When he had removed the valuable white

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pelt from his victim the elated young Pawnee rose to his feet to sound his cry of victory. But the cry died suddenly in his throat and he hurried to the side of his mount, for he saw something which aroused his suspicions. He had discovered a small band of ponies some distance away to the east of him. To all appearances they were riderless and unaccompanied, but their actions made him apprehensive of danger. They were approaching slowly at an acute angle, so that only one side of their bodies was exposed to view. The buckskin called, and his apparently wild kinsmen answered. Then they halted, as if suspicious of the man who stood beside the strange yellow horse. But their show of alarm lacked the characteristic nervousness of the native wild horse. Yellow Bird believed that they were being skilfully manœuvered by concealed riders. Having regarded him for some time, they advanced more rapidly. But the Pawnee was too wily to be caught in the trap, and he jumped upon his pony and rode away at top speed.

One glance over his shoulder confirmed his suspicions. The ponies were racing along on his trail, and each of them carried a Sioux warrior. The plain was shelterless, and Yellow Bird realized that to escape he must hold

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off his pursuers until dark. He had full confidence in the speed and endurance of the little buckskin, and as he had a substantial lead he hoped to escape. He knew that the Sioux, enraged at the failure of their stratagem, would make a determined effort to run him down in open chase. They were well mounted, and Yellow Bird believed that rather than see him escape they would kill their ponies to overtake him.

After the first excited whoops the Sioux raced after him in grim silence. Once, in a spirit of pure bravado, the young Pawnee turned and shook his bow at them. One of the foremost riders answered the challenge with an arrow, but it fell short, and Yellow Bird knew that he was holding his lead. He leaned over and spoke affectionately to the little buckskin. It was running at top speed, and the lad wondered how much longer it could maintain the pace. He had heard his father tell wonderful tales of this horse, and he hoped it would prove itself worthy of his praise. Yellow Bird realized that it had two things in its favor: first, the splendid lead; and second, his light weight upon its back. He was but a stripling, and he felt sure that some of the Sioux ponies were carrying double his weight.

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But at that instant the little buckskin stepped into a concealed badger-hole. Yellow Bird did his best to pull it to its feet, but in spite of his efforts it crashed to the ground and crushed his leg beneath it. The Sioux yelled triumphantly, and urged their ponies at top speed. Yellow Bird dragged himself from beneath his mount and limped to its head. It did not rise, and his heart sank in despair. Then it began to gasp, and his hopes revived. It was stunned and breathless, but he urged it to its feet. Then, as it staggered forward under his frantic blows, he grasped its mane and pulled himself to its back. The effort made him weak and dizzy, for it seemed as if a hundred arrows were tearing their way through his injured leg. But he dared not give way to his agony, and he forced the buckskin into a feeble gallop. Then the game little pony established its reputation. Maddened by its punishment, it recovered from the shock of its fall and bounded away at top speed, and the tortured lad on its back swayed dizzily and fell forward with his arms clasped tightly about its neck.

The Sioux had cut his lead in half, but the buckskin stopped their gain. Three ligaments in its right fore leg were torn, and the fetlock was badly sprained, but the courageous little

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beast only ran the faster for its agony. In spite of their best efforts the pursuing horsemen were unable to gain. They were forced to use their riding quirts unmercifully to keep from being distanced. But the buckskin ran unaided, for pain had rendered unconscious the lad upon its back.

Yellow Bird came to his senses with a start, and caught himself in the act of sliding from his mount. He managed to pull himself into position, and then he turned for a look at his pursuers. They were nearer than when he had last looked, and he believed they were overtaking him. He began to beat the buckskin. But it was running as no other horse in the Pawnee tribe had ever run before, and Yellow Bird saw that it required no urging. Then he suddenly discovered that he had lost his bow. The discovery made him weak at heart. He swept his hand to his knife-sheath, and his fingers closed convulsively about the handle of his hunting-knife. Except for that he was weaponless. He realized the utter hopelessness of keeping the Sioux at bay. Once they came within arrow-range they would have him at their mercy. The useless arrows rattled in the rawhide case at his side, and a futile rage filled his heart at the sound. Then he realized that he must depend en-

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tirely on the faithful little beast beneath him.

Then he again looked over his shoulder, his spirits rose, for most of his pursuers had fallen far behind. He had gained on all but three. These riders were strung out one behind the other, and he saw that they were cutting down his lead. For a moment he had doubts of the buckskin. It was carrying the lightest weight, and he saw no reason why they should gain. Had he known the agony it was suffering, he would have understood the handicap under which it labored. But his own pain made him oblivious to the possibility that his mount also might have suffered from the fall.

The chase continued throughout the day, but the pace had slackened until it was little more than a slow canter by the time twilight gathered. The pursuers were strung along for several miles behind him, and most of them were hopelessly out of the race. The three leading horsemen, however, were almost within arrow-range, and four or five other riders were near enough to be dangerous. They seemed to realize that unless they overtook him before dark their long chase would be in vain, and they were forcing their mounts to the limit to accomplish their victory.

Yellow Bird was equally determined to hold

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them off, for he, too, realized that darkness was coming swiftly to his aid. If he could hold his lead until it fell he believed he might still escape. But the buckskin was far spent, and its loud, labored breathing gave warning of a speedy collapse. He dared not spare it, for to slacken the pace would have been fatal. Inch by inch, foot by foot, yard by yard, his pursuers closed the gap. But each minute the twilight thickened. The little buckskin swerved from its course and an arrow fell to the ground close beside it. Yellow Bird longed for his bow, for he knew that his enemies were within range of him. He crouched forward on his pony's neck and endeavored to force the animal to greater speed. The effort was useless, for the exhausted beast was unable to respond. Another arrow sped by within a foot of his head, and the Pawnee lost hope. He drew his knife and crouched still closer to his horse. He heard the hoof-beats of the ponies behind him. It was almost dark, and the Sioux were forcing their jaded mounts to a killing sprint. If he could hold them off for another half-hour he believed their horses would drop under them. He pounded the buckskin between the ears with the handle of his knife. To his amazement it responded to his appeal, and, open-mouthed, wide-eyed,

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gasping, trembling, the game creature made one final effort and carried him out of range of his pursuers. It carried him a mile or more through the darkness, and then horse and rider fell to the earth, exhausted.

When Yellow Bird finally opened his eyes he was lying on his back with his face upturned to the stars. For a moment or two a sickening dizziness overcame him. Then his brain cleared somewhat and he attempted to rise. He fell back with a groan. He pushed himself to a sitting posture and looked curiously behind him. He heard the labored breathing of his horse, and turning his eyes in the direction he saw the poor beast lying within arm's reach of him. He crawled painfully toward it, and it raised its head as he approached. A hasty examination told him the true story of its gallant race. He sat beside it throughout the night.

At daylight the buckskin rose stiffly to its feet, and Yellow Bird dragged himself up beside it. He looked anxiously across the plain for his pursuers, but they were nowhere in sight. Then, far behind him, he saw a huddled form upon the plain. A long scrutiny enabled him to identify it as a dead pony, and the Pawnee smiled grimly as he realized how determined his pursuers had been. When the

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buckskin was able to walk Yellow Bird pulled himself to its back and turned toward the Pawnee camp. His agony was intense, but he bore it cheerfully, for in a roll on his back he carried the coveted white pelt.

With the exception of Yellow Bird, all the hunters had returned to the Pawnee camp. They had hunted in vain, and old Medicine Elk's reward was still unclaimed. The chief questioned them about the poor orphan lad, but none of them knew what had become of him. They thought he had lost his way and wandered north into the hunting-grounds of the Sioux. A few old women wailed for him, but most of the people looked upon his disappearance indifferently. He was but a lad, unskilled and untried, and warriors do not mourn over such as he. They would avenge him in their next encounter with the Sioux, for he was a Pawnee, but until that time they would dismiss him from their minds. But old Medicine Elk had had a vision, and he believed that Yellow Bird would return. He would have been glad to pay him the reward, for he was fond of the boy. But he kept his hopes to himself, and when the warriors offered various explanations to account for Yellow Bird's disappearance the old chief grunted assent to each of them.

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Several days after the last hunter had returned, some boys were playing at the edge of the Pawnee village, when they suddenly began to shout and point excitedly to the plain. Fearful of an attack from a Sioux war-party, the people ran from the village to look. They saw a solitary figure staggering along at the head of a limping pony. Instantly the truth dawned upon them, and they raised a great shout of joy. "It is Yellow Bird! He is returning to us from the lodges of the Sioux!" But as they watched he fell forward on his face, and the pony stood beside him with drooping head. They mounted their ponies and rushed to his assistance.

That night Yellow Bird was carried to the council-lodge, for he was unable to walk. When old Medicine Elk had assembled his warriors the lad was formally adopted by the great war-chief of the Pawnees. Then he was presented with twenty ponies, ten for bringing the white buffalo-robe and ten more in recognition of his bravery. But of them all, his favorite was the little buckskin, his father's famous buffalo horse.

XI

THE ADVENTURE OF CRYING BEAR

EAGLES were highly prized by the Blackfoot nation. Their feathers were made into gaudy war-bonnets, and were used for decorating shields and other personal belongings. No warrior of importance could afford to be without some of these valuable feathers. They were so valuable that several dead eagles would often secure a splendid hunting pony in trade.

Crying Bear, the young Blackfoot, had risen to the honorable rank of warrior, and yet he did not own a single feather of this warlike bird. In order to gain the prestige due one of his exalted rank he must secure feathers enough for his use at the earliest opportunity.

After the manner of his people, therefore, he withdrew from the village one dark night, and made his way alone to a near-by mountaintop. There, wrapped in his robe, he sat through the long hours of darkness, absorbed

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in prayer and supplication to The One Above. He asked for success on his expedition and that good medicine would bring many eagles to his bait.

With the first light of day he was back in the village to gather his weapons, his robe, some food, and several hoe-like instruments for digging. Then he started across the prairie toward the distant mountains on his quest.

As the sun sank toward the horizon he came within the cool shadow of the towering peaks at the edge of the plain. Proceeding to a high rise of ground, he dug a hole slightly deeper than his own height. He was very careful to carry away and secrete the earth removed, so that the natural appearance of the surroundings were not interfered with. Then from a strip of timber at the mountain base he brought a back-load of poles of varying lengths and thicknesses. Next he collected several armfuls of brush and long grasses. Placing these near the hole for use next day, he withdrew to the shelter of the forest which began at the prairie-rim. He stole silently along through the trees, following the faint impression of a recent deer trail. At short intervals he stooped to examine a displaced stone, a crushed leaf, or a broken twig, and so ascer-

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tained that the unsuspecting animal was but a short distance in advance of him.

Crying Bear made his way toward a small woodland pool that shimmered in the rays of the setting sun. As he peered through the branches, it appeared before him like some rare gem flashing forth from its setting of emerald.

Then he heard something at his right, and a moment later a magnificent black-tail buck strode to the water's edge. Not a breeze rippled the glassy surface of the pool, and the sensitive nose searched in vain for some suspicious taint of unseen danger. Crying Bear fitted an arrow to his bow and waited in eager suspense. Twice the antlered head was lowered to drink, and twice raised nervously, as with twitching nostrils and erect, moving ears the timid creature searched for danger.

The flinty point of the arrow was aimed just behind the shoulder, the tense fingers were taken from the tightened bowstring, and with the noise of an angry bee the missile sped to its goal. A dull thud—and the stricken buck fell dead in the shallow pool. Crying Bear hurried to the prostrate form. His practised hands soon dismembered and cut up the carcass. Then, having selected what meat he required, he prepared to camp for the night.

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Several times during the night the snarls and cries of hungry animals sounded from the vicinity of the kill. Once he heard the growl of a bear. Then all was still, and he concluded that the smaller animals had fled at the approach of this formidable beast.

Long before daylight the eagle-hunter made his way noiselessly to the excavated pit. Depositing a large piece of deer meat on the ground near by, he began laying the poles across one-half of the opening. The bottom layer was placed lengthwise, the top crosswise, and then the poles were loosely thatched on top with brush and grass. Next, the piece of fresh meat was brought and fastened to a long bit of buckskin, which was dropped down into the pit. The bait was placed conspicuously on top of the grass and brush. Then Crying Bear dropped into the hole. He carefully arranged the sticks and covering until the whole opening was thickly roofed over. As he stood upright in his hiding-place his head came within a foot of the top. With his hands he arranged the underlying poles so that he might reach through the dense covering of his roof at any desired spot. Having arranged the bait to his satisfaction, he squatted down to wait for daylight and the coming of the eagles.

From far up in the sky, as they sailed forth

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in search of food, the great birds would be sure to see the alluring bait so prominently displayed. Swooping down, they would alight at some little distance where they could make a safe inspection. Satisfied, at length, that a bountiful providence had left this tempting morsel especially for them, they would walk boldly upon the concealed platform to carry off the generous bit of carcass. Unable to fly away with it, owing to the restraining bit of buckskin whose trailing end was held by the concealed watcher, the unwary birds would remain to rend and tear the meat piece by piece. Then a hand would be stealthily thrust up through an opening between the poles, and the legs of the unfortunate bird would be clasped in a grip of steel. It would then be dragged below to be knelt on and strangled.

Greeted by a noisy chorus of coyotes, the light of dawn crept slowly down the mountains and out over the level plain. Already some enterprising black-capped chickadees were industriously pecking at the bait. A croaking raven alighted and would have torn and scattered the lure had not Crying Bear thrust up at him with a stick and frightened him away.

The rising sun warmed and wakened into life the high gloomy crags and pinnacles of

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the mountains. A large golden eagle preened its plumage and shook itself. Then it left its lofty, sun-kissed aerie, and launched forth into space. In large circles it sailed out over the plain below, its keen eyes strained in a search for food. Spying the kill far beneath it, it dove toward the earth with a wild scream.

The noisy rush of air through stiffened primaries, and the dull thud of a heavy body striking the prairie, warned Crying Bear that an eagle had dropped to the lure. Anxious and eager, he waited for the appearance of the great bird on the platform above him.

Alighting some little distance from the trap, the eagle stood with spread wings and cocked head, suspiciously inspecting the tempting bait. As if to shame it for its cowardice, the mischievous chickadees returned to the carcass and called derisively to the eagle as they ate their fill. With great stiff-legged strides, and the bold, insolent swagger of a born freebooter, the feathered monarch made his way slowly to the fatal feast.

He tugged furiously at the fastened meat in a vain effort to carry it off. Twice he raised it from its resting-place, and Crying Bear was obliged to pull with all his might to retain it. Aware that for some reason he could not carry his prize away, the baffled bird decided to re-

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main and dispose of it on the spot. Pulling and tearing with beak and talons, he bolted great chunks of the bloody meat. In the midst of his repast, however, he was tightly grasped about the legs and, flapping and hissing, pulled through the flimsy platform and into the concealed pit below. Not before he had inflicted several painful wounds on his captor, however, was the life finally crushed out of him. Then the trap was rearranged for another victim.

Crying Bear remained in concealment the entire day, and captured several more eagles and a number of large hawks. Then, as the long slanting shadows from the mountains fell across the plain at the approach of evening, he again heard the thud of a heavy body on the earth near his trap. As before, he crouched low and waited eagerly to secure one more eagle before abandoning his shelter.

A peculiar sniffing noise was followed by the unmistakable growl of a bear. Greatly surprised, the concealed hunter rose on tiptoe to peer anxiously through the interlaced branches. For a moment his heart failed him, for his staring eyes beheld a monster grizzly sniffing suspiciously at the tainted air.

As the huge beast advanced cautiously toward the bait, the panic-stricken lad

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crouched at the bottom of the pit. His active mind instantly foresaw the fatal results should the bear walk unwittingly upon the frail platform of sticks. It would instantly give way beneath the great weight and precipitate the savage animal into the pit on top of him. Jumping to his feet, therefore, he pulled the decoying meat quickly into the hole. Shouting loudly, he tore at the roofing of poles and their covering and soon scattered them, leaving the top of his pit open to the sky. Then, with thumping heart and parched lips, he crouched down among the bodies of his feathered victims.

The grizzly, having observed this unexpected commotion, heard and noted the mysterious disappearance of his intended meal and evidently suspected the presence of a rival. With a savage growl, he charged to the rim of the hole and peered over. In the bottom crouched the terrorized young Blackfoot, gazing fearfully up into the snarling face of the bear.

Due to an old-time superstition prevalent among the people, eagle-hunters considered it bad luck to carry their weapons into the pit with them; they must be left securely hidden at their camping-place. The young brave saw the folly of this now, and wished with all his

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heart that his trusty bow and arrows were reposing by his side. Weaponless, and a prisoner in his own trap, he cowered helpless in the bottom of the pit.

The enraged grizzly, urged on by the smell of the bloody meat, was making desperate efforts to reach his imprisoned prey. Lying prone, the great beast leaned dangerously over the rim and reached down with its huge paw. Unable to quite reach the huddled figure below, it tore frantically at the earth in its rage. Several times the bear started to climb head foremost into the hole, but the drop was too great and the sides too smooth and steep, and each time it reluctantly drew back. Then it ambled awkwardly about the circular rim, endeavoring to find some easier way of reaching its enemy. Ugly growls denoted its increasing rage as it made further frantic but ineffectual attempts to reach the victim of its wrath.

Crying Bear noted the gradual fading of daylight from the sky above. His heart filled with misgivings at the thought of approaching darkness. The possibilities of the night sent a shudder through him. Should the bear step carelessly over the edge of the hole and come crashing down upon him, he would be mauled to death before he could clamber out. On the other hand, should he himself attempt to

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leave the pit under cover of darkness, he would in all probability find the wily animal waiting to strike a death-blow when his head appeared above the rim.

The bear, baffled for the present, had gone some distance away from the hole and was laying grim, silent siege to the beleaguered hunter. The blackness of night finally settled down over the plain, and still Crying Bear huddled in the bottom of the pit. Cold, hungry, and parched, he dared not rise, for fear of the swift lunge of an unseen paw. Several times he heard the fierce brute growling above the hole, and from the falling earth and pebbles he knew that the determined animal had again renewed its efforts to reach him. Once he heard it scratching on the side-wall with its long, cruel claws, and he feared it was about to plunge head foremost to the bottom of the pit. At length, after many futile endeavors to reach him, it again withdrew, and Crying Bear believed that for the moment, at least, he was safe.

Cramped from his awkward position, the Blackfoot dared not attempt to ease his strained muscles, for fear of inviting a fresh attack. That the persistent animal was still on guard he felt sure. Then an idea came to him and he proceeded to try it. Rising

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quickly, he threw the piece of deer meat from the pit, and instantly crouched down again. Hopeful that the watching bear would accept this peace offering and withdraw, the young warrior waited, listening anxiously.

The bear at once rushed and secured the meat. Withdrawing a short distance from the pit, it proceeded to eat its fill, but refused to abandon its obstinate vigil.

The spirit of Crying Bear sank within him. Evidently the aggressive creature intended to remain until he crawled from his shelter. The outlook seemed gloomy indeed. His throat was parched with thirst, his body was racked with the pains of hunger, his muscles were sore and cramped, and his heart was faint and sad. Then the fighting blood of his people surged through his veins and gave him courage. If he only had possessed his weapons he would have crawled forth, uttering his battle-cry, and engaged the ugly beast in mortal combat. Even with his hunting-knife to aid him he could have risen and enticed the bear within range of its fatal sweep. His helplessness goaded him into a rage, and, clenching his fists, he called out foolishly, daring the grizzly to come into the pit to fight him. Then, realizing his folly, he calmed himself and endeavored to think of some way to escape.

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The sounds of feasting had subsided, and Crying Bear was uncertain as to whether or not the grizzly had finally withdrawn. He was not left long in doubt, however, for savage growls and falling earth heralded another attack on his hiding-place. So much earth was torn loose and sent upon him that the alarmed hunter had grave fears that the bear might intend to bury him alive. This falling debris fell upon his head and entered his eyes, and as he was unable to tell where the next lot would come from, owing to the impenetrable blackness, he was obliged to endure the torture. Finally it ceased, and he knew that the bear had again withdrawn to rest. Unwilling to sacrifice his highly prized trophies, the eagles, the desperate hunter threw the less valuable bodies of the hawks from the hole in an endeavor to appease the anger of the grizzly. He listened, only to hear the great beast walk leisurely to the birds, evidently crush them with its huge paw, sniff contemptuously once or twice, and again return to the attack on the pit. This time it lost its balance and slipped forward, head downward, but luckily stopped itself by digging its long claws into the earth. As the awkward beast drew back with a grunt the tense hunter relaxed with a great sigh of relief.

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The long hours of darkness dragged slowly along while the bear kept up a series of intermittent attacks, and the besieged hunter crouched in fear and anxiety at the bottom of the pit. It seemed to him that daylight would never come, and he called to The One Above to send him light and aid. Once, unable to endure the cramp in his legs, he rose cautiously to his feet. Rejoicing in the relief to his strained muscles he did not hear the approach of the stealthy animal above him, and in a powerful sweep the death-dealing paw just grazed the top of his head. Needless to say, Crying Bear did not rise again during the rest of the night.

With the dawn his spirits rose, and although weak and faint for want of food and drink he felt sure that with the coming of daylight the bear would take its departure. Looking nervously upward he saw great hollows scooped in the rim of the pit, while long deep claw-marks showed well down the sides. He raised himself slowly to his full height. He was scarcely able to stand, with the cramp in his legs. Then he placed his hands on the rim of the hole and drew himself up to look out upon the prairie. However, as soon as his head appeared the watchful grizzly charged at him. Again he cowered in the bottom of

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the pit and again the bear tore at the earth like a big dog endeavoring to dig out a woodchuck.

The sun rose and the hours of the morning passed painfully by. Still the bear kept guard. The unfortunate hunter was in misery. His throat burned as if on fire, and his swollen tongue filled his mouth and choked him. He had bitten into the necks of the dead eagles and endeavored to suck some of the blood from their veins. Then he had eaten parts of the birds raw to allay the pangs of hunger. To venture from the pit meant swift and terrible death; to pass another night similar to the one he had passed would be equally fatal. Already he was beginning to clutch at his clogged throat in his painful efforts to swallow.

Late in the day, as he was abandoning hope, he heard the thunder of many hoof-beats on the sun-baked plain. Then the wild hunting-yell of his people sounded in his ears and a horde of Blackfoot warriors seemed to ride over him. Too weak to raise himself to the rim of the pit, he was lifted out by his comrades, who pointed triumphantly to the carcass of the bear lying a short distance away. Fighting to the last, the savage beast had fallen literally filled with arrows.

THE ADVENTURE OF CRYING BEAR

The rescuers were a returning hunting-party of Blackfeet who, having discovered the bear out on the prairie, at once gave chase and thereby discovered the predicament of their tribesman.

THE END

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